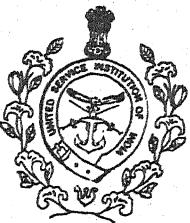


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# **NAVAL OPERATIONS**

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HISTORY OF THE GREAT WAR  
BASED ON OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS

BY DIRECTION OF THE HISTORICAL SECTION OF THE  
COMMITTEE OF IMPERIAL DEFENCE

NAVAL OPERATIONS

Vol. IV

BY  
HENRY NEWBOLT

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## PREFACE

THE *Naval History of the Great War* suffered at the end of 1922 an irreparable misfortune—the loss by death of its first architect and builder, Sir Julian Corbett, a man not only of intellectual and literary ability, but also of wide historical experience and balanced judgment. It was evident that the task of his successor must necessarily be a hard one : more than half the work remained to be done, and the qualities required were not likely to be once more found in full combination. On the other hand, the risk of failure was slightly lessened by two circumstances. First, the continuator would have the advantage of inheriting the system built up by his predecessor, and the services of the Staff who had been trained by long years of efficient and enthusiastic co-operation. The time has perhaps not yet come to say more on this point, which well deserves to be amplified and illustrated ; but I cannot pass by without a tribute of admiration and gratitude the ten years' work of the late Mr. H. G. A. Leveson, the archivist of the Historical Section.

The second favourable circumstance was due to a coincidence. Sir Julian's last volume closed with the close of the battle of Jutland. Much remained to be said about that event, but the event itself had been fully narrated : the first stage of the war had been brought to a definite conclusion. The period of great naval operations in the old sense was over : the remaining volumes of the History were to deal with a new kind of war, a naval war on a vast scale, but conducted mainly by blockade and counter-blockade, both unexampled in kind ; and with a moral struggle in which the vital conflict at sea was inseparably interwoven with a conflict of imponderable forces, acting by intrigues and negotiations, national and international. The new aspect would naturally call for some change or development of method, and the contrast between the working of two minds might thus be fortunately obscured.



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## CHAPTER I

### AFTER JUTLAND

ADMIRAL JELLINEC's Battle Fleet (1st, 2nd, 4th and 5th Battle Squadrons) with the 4th Light Cruiser Squadron, the 11th and 12th Destroyer Flotillas, and part of the 4th Flotilla, arrived at Scapa between 10.30 a.m. and noon on June 2.<sup>1</sup> At 9.45 p.m. Admiral Jellicoe reported to the Admiralty that the Grand Fleet was at its base, re-fuelled, with steam at four hours' notice, and ready for sea. In reply to an inquiry, Admiral Beatty reported at 11.20 p.m. on June 3 that three of his ships, the *New Zealand*, *Indomitable* and *Inflexible*, were ready for action, and three others, the *Lion*, *Tiger* and *Princess Royal*, were available for action if necessary.

The result of the Jutland action may be summed up as follows from the purely strategical point of view: Admiral Scheer had failed in his object of cutting off and overwhelming part of our advanced forces, and had found himself unexpectedly entrapped into meeting the Grand Fleet. From this encounter he had succeeded in extricating himself at considerable expense, but, on the other hand, both before and after the main action he had inflicted upon us more serious losses than he could ever have contemplated. Admiral Jellicoe had outmaneuvered and surprised the High Seas Fleet, and for him the net result of the action had been to increase the Grand Fleet's large margin of superiority as a combative force, a defence against invasion, and an instrument of blockade. The control of the North Sea remained in our hands, and any expectation that this control might be weakened or taken from us had been finally dissipated.

<sup>1</sup> The 2nd Cruiser Squadron with the *Duke of Edinburgh* (1st Cruiser Squadron) remained at sea searching for disabled ships, and reached Scapa on the afternoon of June 3. Other ships came as follows: the *Marlborough* (1st Battle Squadron) arrived in the Humber at 8 a.m. on June 2, and the *Waspire* was already at Rosyth by 3 p.m. on June 1; the *Barham* proceeded to Devonport and the *Malaya* to Cromarty for repairs on the 3rd. The *Nonsuch* (12th Destroyer Flotilla) with the *Unity* and *Acasta* arrived at Aberdeen in the evening of June 2, the *Acasta* in tow by the *Nonsuch*.

Merchant vessels which before the battle had been lying up in various ports put to sea on June 2 without hesitation.

It was not, however, from the purely strategical or the purely practical point of view that a general action between the two great fleets could at the moment be judged by the British or the German nations. On the one side, an empire founded and sustained by naval power and for a century accustomed to rely upon a well-proved maritime supremacy had been looking eagerly for a decisive encounter which would mark a turning-point in the war, and give the world a spectacular proof of its superiority at sea. On the other side, a people with no experience of naval war and no accurate judgment of the value of its untried weapon was moved by the conflicting emotions of ambition and apprehension. A second Trafalgar, an overwhelming and destructive British victory, was, among the several possible results, the only one which could not have surprised either side; what actually happened was unexpected by both. There is evidence that in the German navy, in spite of its high fighting spirit, the severe injuries received and the obvious necessity of retiring from close action caused a certain amount of dismay, but it would appear that, among the officers at any rate, the most marked feeling was one of relief and enthusiastic congratulation at having met the Grand Fleet and escaped without suffering something like complete destruction. It must also be remembered that the amount of guidance given to public

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The *Defender* arrived at Aberdeen at 1 p.m. on the 2nd with the *Onslow* (13th Destroyer Flotilla) in tow. The *Porpoise*, *Contest*, *Garland* and *Spitfire* (4th Destroyer Flotilla) arrived in the Tyne on June 2, and the *Broke* at 6 p.m. on the 3rd. The *Christopher* (4th Destroyer Flotilla) and the light cruisers *Active* and *Constance*, who were detached on the 2nd to look for the *Broke*, returned on June 3 to Rosyth and Scapa.

The Battle Cruiser Fleet (1st, 2nd and 3rd Battle Cruiser Squadrons) arrived at Rosyth on the morning of June 2. The *Lion*, *Tiger* and *Princess Royal* had received twelve, ten and six hits respectively, but did not dock for repairs until a week later. The *Australia*, which had not been in the action, arrived from Devonport on the 3rd and rejoined her squadron on the 10th. The 1st, 2nd and 3rd Light Cruiser Squadrons arrived at Rosyth on the morning of the 2nd, but without the *Chester* (3rd Light Cruiser Squadron), which had gone into the Humber for repairs on the 1st, and the *Southampton* (2nd Light Cruiser Squadron), which had been obliged to heave to and plug the shell holes in the waterline. The *Birmingham* had remained in company, and they both arrived in Rosyth about 12 hours after the remainder of the Battle Cruiser Fleet. The *Southampton* was taken into the dockyard a few hours after her arrival in harbour. The 1st and 13th Flotillas with attached destroyers arrived at Rosyth on the morning of June 2. The *Onslow* and *Petard* (13th Destroyer Flotilla) proceeded to Aberdeen and Leith for repairs.

opinion in the two countries differed very greatly both in skill and thoroughness. The methods of censorship and propaganda were practised by the Germans with premeditation and mechanical efficiency; by the British rather as an after-thought, and always with an instinctive feeling that candour would in the long run prove to be the most effective of psychological influences. This difference was well illustrated on the one side by the saying of Admiral von Holtzendorff that "in life it is not things as they are which decide, but the images people make of them. Whether Great Britain's naval predominance remains or not depends on what the rest of the world outside of Germany thinks on the matter on the last day of the world war." On the other side, no better example can be chosen than the first announcement of the battle of Jutland written by the First Lord of the Admiralty and issued to the Press on the evening of June 2, 1916. It ran as follows:—

"On the afternoon of Wednesday May 31, a naval engagement took place off the coast of Jutland. The British ships on which the brunt of the fighting fell were the Battle Cruiser Fleet, and some cruisers and light cruisers supported by four fast battleships. Among those the losses were heavy. The German battlefleet, aided by low visibility, avoided prolonged action with our main forces, and soon after these appeared on the scene, the enemy returned to port, though not before receiving severe damage from our battleships. The Battle Cruisers *Queen Mary*, *Indefatigable*, *Invincible*, and the Cruisers *Defence* and *Black Prince* were sunk. The *Warrior* was disabled, and after being towed for some time, had to be abandoned by her crew. It is also known that the destroyers *Tipperary*, *Turbulent*, *Fortune*, *Sparrowhawk* and *Ardent* were lost, and six others are not yet accounted for. No British battleships or light cruisers were sunk. The enemy's losses were serious. At least one battle cruiser was destroyed, and one severely damaged; one battleship reported sunk by our destroyers during a night attack, two light cruisers were disabled and probably sunk. The exact number of enemy destroyers disposed of during the action cannot be ascertained with any certainty, but it must have been large."

Looking back from a position of complete knowledge and with the whole course of the war far behind us, we can now distinguish the merits of this announcement and the single point upon which it was disappointing. It was candid,

accurate and restrained, and these are qualities upon which our people specially pride themselves. Yet it caused dismay and even indignation, because, while it said not a word that could ever be regretted, it did nothing to meet the immediate need of the nation. It disappointed high hopes without offering instead any estimate of the measure of success gained, or giving any guidance to the public as to the resulting naval position or the probable future course of the war at sea. It was, in short, designed as a first instalment of news, to be followed by further information when available, and by an appreciation when all should be known. To adopt so scientific a method at so sensational a moment was a proof of extreme confidence in the stability and good sense of our people; the stability was apparent from the first, as in all the disappointments of the war, but the good sense took time and some rather ill-co-ordinated efforts to establish itself.

This was partly due to the difficulty of ascertaining the details of the fighting and of the losses incurred on each side. The British Admiralty, only six hours after their first statement, issued a later report in which they substantially corrected the list of our destroyer casualties, but also claimed that three German capital ships had been sunk instead of two. This was substantially true, for besides the *Pommern* and the *Lützow*, the *Seydlitz* had in fact sunk in shallow water on the way home, and was only raised and towed in some days later. But the German Admiralty were ahead of us both in time and enterprise. Their Official Report, dated June 1, and published on the 2nd, was received in neutral countries and commented on in the Press at least a whole day before any news arrived from English sources. It ran, as follows :

" During an enterprise directed northward our High Seas Fleet encountered on May 31 the main part of the English fighting Fleet, which was considerably superior to our own forces. During the afternoon a series of heavy engagements developed between Skagerrak and Horn Reefs, which were successful for us and which also continued during the whole of the night. In these engagements, as far as is known up to the present, were destroyed by us the large battleship *Warspite*, the battle cruisers *Queen Mary* and *Indefatigable*, two armoured cruisers apparently of the *Achilles* type, one small cruiser, the new flagships of the destroyer squadrons, the *Turbulent*, *Nestor* and *Acasta*, a large number of torpedo-boat destroyers and one submarine.

By observations, which are free from any objections, it was stated that a large number of English battleships suffered damage from our ships' artillery and from the attacks of our torpedo-boat flotillas during the day and night engagements. Among others, the large battleship *Marlborough* was hit by a torpedo, as has been confirmed by prisoners. Several of our ships rescued portions of the crews of the sunk English ships, among whom were only two survivors of the *Indefatigable*. On our side the small cruiser *Wiesbaden* was sunk by hostile artillery fire during the day engagements, and the *Pommern* during the night by a torpedo. The fate of the *Frauenlob*, which is missing, and of some torpedo-boats which have not yet returned, is unknown. The High Seas Fleet returned to our ports during the day."

Both the overestimates and the omissions in this document are notable. We had lost no large battleship, no light cruiser, nor had any English battleships been damaged by German gunfire, except three of the advanced squadron with Admiral Beatty. But we all know how difficult it is to obtain trustworthy evidence on such occasions: it was the deliberate concealments which differentiated this report from the British one. On their own side, the German Admiralty only admitted the loss of the *Pommern* and the *Wiesbaden*; they added that the *Frauenlob* and some destroyers had not returned, but said nothing of the grounding of the *Seydlitz* nor of the destruction of the *Elbing* and the *Rostock*, light cruisers, and the *Lützow*, battle cruiser, all three of which they had been compelled to abandon and sink themselves. This omission obviously cannot have been due to lack of information: it was made deliberately, on the principle that what the enemy's eye hath not seen, his heart cannot rejoice over. The effect, however, was in the end unfavourable, as we shall see presently. British newspaper comment on the Official Reports was at first little but a chorus of disappointment, to which the more responsible voices added a note of consolation here and there. *The Times* hoped that the German losses would be found to balance ours; the *Morning Post* and *Daily Telegraph* pointed to the retreat of the enemy, and concluded that our battle cruisers had suffered because, while operating ahead of the main squadron, they had for a time been in action with the whole of the High Seas Fleet. This view was also taken by the naval correspondent of the *Westminster Gazette* the same evening, and by Sunday morning it was generally accepted by the press-reading public.

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On Monday, June 5, the British Admiralty issued a new report which ran as follows :

"To Press Bureau for publication, 9 p.m.—Until the C.-in-C. has had time to consult the officers engaged, and to write a full despatch, any attempt to give a detailed history of the naval engagement which began on afternoon of May 31 and ended in morning hours of June 1, would evidently be premature. But the results are quite plain. The Grand Fleet came in touch with the German High Seas Fleet at 3.30 on the afternoon of May 31. The leading ships of the two fleets carried on a vigorous fight, in which battle cruisers, fast battleships and subsidiary craft all took an active part. The losses were severe on both sides; but when the main body of the British fleet came into contact with the German High Seas Fleet, a very brief period sufficed to compel the latter, who had been severely punished, to seek refuge in their protected waters. This manœuvre was rendered possible by low visibility and mist: and although the Grand Fleet were now and then able to get into momentary contact with their opponents, no continuous action was possible. They continued the pursuit until the light had wholly failed; when the British destroyers were able to make a successful attack upon the enemy during the night. Meanwhile, Sir John Jellicoe, having driven the enemy into port, returned to the main scene of action, and scoured the sea in search of disabled vessels. By noon the next day (June 1) it became evident that there was nothing more to be done. He returned, therefore, to his bases, four hundred miles away, re-fuelled his fleet, and in the evening of June 2 was again ready to put to sea. The British losses have already been fully stated, and there is nothing to add to, or subtract from the latest account published by the Admiralty. The enemy losses are less easy to determine. That the accounts they have given to the world are false, is certain—and we cannot yet be sure of the exact truth. But from such evidence as has come to our knowledge, the Admiralty entertain no doubt that the German losses are heavier than the British—not merely relatively to the strength of the two fleets, but absolutely. There seems to be the strongest ground for supposing that included in the German losses are: two battleships, two Dreadnought battle cruisers of the most powerful type, two of the latest light cruisers (*Wiesbaden* and *Elbing*), a light cruiser of the *Rostock* type, the light cruiser *Frauenlob*, at least nine destroyers, and a submarine."

This report set out two claims to victory: first, we had "driven the enemy into port . . . and scoured the sea in search of disabled vessels"; secondly, we committed ourselves to the statement that the German losses were not relatively, but absolutely, heavier than ours.

To the report were added an appreciation by Mr. Winston Churchill, and a semi-official report by a highly placed naval officer. A brief analysis will show the direction in which they influenced public opinion.

Mr. Churchill evidently did not accept the official estimate of enemy losses. The whole purpose of his statement was to show that the loss of the *Lützow* or the *Derfflinger*, with the *Wiesbaden* and *Elbing*, was more serious for the Germans than the sinking of the *Queen Mary*, the *Invincible* and the *Indefatigable*. If he had believed our claim to have sunk "two battleships and two Dreadnought battle cruisers," his argument would have been beside the point. In the second place, he did not rely upon the fact that we had driven the enemy into port. In his view the reassuring aspect of the battle was not that we had remained in possession of the scene of action, but that the enemy had no surprises in store for us.<sup>1</sup> This was an indirect but clear announcement that we might look forward with confidence to any future meeting of the fleets.

This summary deserved better treatment than it received. Mr. Churchill had set aside estimates which were unproved, but had at the same time shown that, even on the least favourable reading of the communiqués, there was no need for alarm. He had, in fact, been both critical and encouraging, at a moment when it was not easy to be either. Unfortunately for the success of his effort, he had not accepted those assurances of heavy German losses which the nation considered to be our best title to victory. Partly on this account, partly because he was unpopular at the time and the country was irritable from disappointment, his appreciation raised a violent squall of criticism, and little or no attempt was made to grasp the meaning of what was perhaps the soundest and most objective estimate of the battle which had yet appeared. The semi-official report by "a high naval officer" was also an important contribution. Who he was has never been made known; but his account was a tactful attempt to correct in one particular of great practical importance the false impression which the public had been

<sup>1</sup> A rumour that the Germans were arming their ships with heavier guns than ours had actually been the subject of investigation by the War Committee.

taking from the Press. The Admiralty knew, from Admiral Beatty's telegram and from that of the Commander-in-Chief, that the loss of our battle cruisers had been caused not by a stronger, but by a numerically weaker enemy force. It needed no expert commentary to make clear the point that, however this had happened, it was an event without precedent in British naval history, and with a significant lesson for the future. The Admiralty could not, in the public interest, impart this lesson to the nation before they had themselves taken action upon it; but the attention of the critics might usefully be recalled to the facts.

The "high naval officer" did this discreetly in the following words: "The great battle had four phases: the first opening at 3.15 p.m., when our battle cruisers joined action with the *enemy's battle cruisers*. Shortly afterwards, the second phase began, with the arrival, on both sides, of the battleships; the third phase was the engagement of the battleships, which was never more than partial . . .".

This was a well-timed corrective, for on June 5, the day when it appeared, the Press had passed to the enthusiastic mood and was practically unanimous in acclaiming the victory "because, as we now learn, the German fleet lost more heavily than the British," and in describing it as primarily due to the incomparable fight of our battle cruisers against "the flower of the German High Seas Fleet." To these commentaries the Admiralty could make no objection: they were not derived from confidential communications, but from official reports, and their substratum of facts, though inaccurate in detail, was substantially sound—for the enemy fleet had been heavily damaged, and our battle cruisers had fought with the traditional naval spirit in unforeseen and trying circumstances. But the public were none the less being drawn into accepting views which were not only exposed to criticism on minor points, but which might help towards the misunderstanding or neglect of some of the true lessons of the battle.

It would, however, have been a great misfortune if the legend of Admiral Beatty's heroic and unequal contest had been allowed to circulate through the nation without correctives; and the Press was well provided with expert writers who were quick to see the need for a more critical attitude. On the next day, June 6, either in consequence of the "high naval officer's" report, or because a verbal hint had been given by the Admiralty officials to the representatives of the Press, special articles in three leading journals began cautiously

to recapitulate the phases of the action in a new light, and on the 7th, *Land and Water* published an article which at last initiated the movement towards intelligent technical criticism. The new tendency was strongly shown in articles published by the *Daily News* and the *Globe* on June 9. Of these, one dealt with the problem of securing the magazines of a capital ship against the danger of explosions caused by gunfire; the other contained an examination of the rival claims of armour and gunpowder in the design of a modern battleship. This line of inquiry was obviously suggested by the loss of the battle cruisers, and the article remarked that "in any case it seems established that our cruisers were destroyed not so much by the punch and smash of the enemy's gunfire as through an omission in their design."

During the next month the Press did not publish anything which effected any fresh change in the nation's attitude with regard to the battle. It may be said, then, that it had taken no more than one week—from June 2 to June 9—for the British mind to swing to its anchor. It is impossible to say how far the ordinary public grasped the significance of the facts, which had now come through to them, but it was an unmistakable sign of health that they had begun to take a scientific rather than a purely emotional interest in them. They soon saw that the matters now under discussion were beyond their scope, and they perceived, at the same time, that their first instinctive anxiety had disappeared. The Grand Fleet was as ready and as competent as ever to fulfil its duties: its dispositions and routine were unchanged; any necessary technical improvements would, no doubt, be put in hand at once. The Admiralty showed no sign of apprehension as to the future of the war at sea, and private letters from officers and men present in the action, which were being published in many papers, proved that the navy's one desire was to meet the enemy again as soon as possible with a few more hours of daylight in hand for a fight to a finish. In short, the position was intact, and the question of victory had been shown to be a merely verbal one.

The soundness of the standpoint thus reached by our people was strikingly affirmed by the public opinion of the neutral nations of Europe—the more strikingly because the first account of the battle came to the latter from Berlin, and by anticipating our own by twenty-four hours, produced for a day or two a belief that we had really suffered nothing less than a defeat. In Denmark it was noted on the evening of June 2 that "ten hours have passed since the

German report, and no news has come from England . . . the English silence is believed to be a confirmation." Dutch papers on that day and the next also spoke of our silence as "no very favourable sign." In Rome only the German account was printed on the 3rd. And in both Holland and Sweden the British communiqué, when it did come, was taken to confirm the German statements about a stupendous victory. On the 4th the *Basler Nachrichten* suggested that if our damaged ships were in proportion to those sunk, "Germany, before two or three months are over, will break the blockade and end the war." In Zurich too it was the opinion on June 3 that "the losses of the English fleet give the Germans the right to speak of victory." A still more adverse view was that of the Dutch *Standard* on the 5th, which declared "the position on the great waters completely transformed."

So much the enemy had gained by their prompt and secretive method of propaganda: they were now to pay the price and find themselves losers on the transaction. On the 8th after five whole days of silence, they issued a communiqué which gave a denial to all British reports, official and semi-official, upon the action. After elaborating this contradiction at some length, the German authorities stated it had been necessary for military reasons, to conceal the loss of the *Lützow* and the *Rostock*, but that, in view of British exaggerations, it had been decided to reveal them. This belated admission caused a strong and general revulsion of feeling. Alike in Denmark, Holland, Norway, Sweden and Spain there were sarcastic and contemptuous comments on the untruthfulness of the German reports. The famous expression "to lie like a bulletin" was said exactly to fit the German official communiqué; and this last was greeted with universal derision in Holland, where it was thought to resemble "an entreaty to the world to believe that Germany had really gained a victory." The Germanophil Swedish paper *Svenska Dagbladet* complained bitterly that "the German authorities are trying to throw dust in the eyes of readers," and the *Stockholmstidning*, a journal often unfriendly to the Allies, spoke on June 9 of the last German communiqué as "affording a painful surprise to those who have uncritically accepted the dogma of the defeat of the British battle fleet." In Denmark the *Tidens Tegn* of June 10 contrasted the "admirable frankness" of the British Admiralty and the "peculiar light" thrown on the German reports by their acknowledgment of losses previously denied, concluding that "even if the victory was not a complete one, there can be little doubt

that it must be credited to Admiral Jellicoe." In Spain *El Mundo* remarked on June 10 that "no one can blame the Germans for seeking safety, but one does blame their subsequent brag," while *El Liberal* pronounced that in Germany "the rulers have transformed what might have been a crushing disaster, averted by a timely flight, into a motive for national rejoicing." By June 16 it was perceived in Norway that "England's position as the world's strongest sea-Power was not—as originally supposed—shaken." In Holland it was considered that "the English carried off the fruits of victory, and still rule the sea, despite heavy losses." The *Nederlander* enunciated the principle that "the fleet which is first in a position to renew the conflict is victorious," and implied that the German fleet was not in that position. The Dutch naval officers were reported to be "filled with admiration for the speed with which Jellicoe was ready for action again."

In short, the neutral nations, like our own, had in a few days come back to their old moorings, realising afresh that there are in war such things as material facts, and that they will more often than not end by nullifying "the images which people make of them." We must not do the German leaders the injustice of supposing that they were not able to perceive this. It might be desirable to make images for the encouragement of their people and the maintenance of a hopeful tradition in their young navy; but for the determination of policy facts must weigh more heavily. Admiral Scheer tells us that the main lesson of the Battle of Jutland was thus summarised by him at the time: "The battle proved that the organisation of our Navy as a High Seas Fleet was a step in the right direction. The German national spirit can only be impressed on the world through a High Seas Fleet directed against England. If, however, as an outcome of our present condition, we are not finally to be bled to death, full use must be made of the U-boat as a means of war, so as to grip England's vital nerve."<sup>1</sup> This was no passing opinion, but a fixed point of policy. On July 4 the Admiral sent a written report to the Kaiser, giving privately his "final impressions of the battle." The operative words are contained in the last paragraph. "With a favourable succession of operations the enemy may be made to suffer severely, although there can be no doubt that even the most successful result from a high sea battle will not compel England to make peace. The disadvantages of our geographical situation—and the enemy's vast material

<sup>1</sup> Scheer, *Germany's High Sea Fleet*, p. 177 (Eng. ed.).

superiority—cannot be coped with to such a degree as to make us masters of the blockade inflicted on us. . . . A victorious end to the war at not too distant a date can only be looked for by the crushing of English economic life through U-boat action against English commerce.”<sup>1</sup> This proposition he afterwards stated a third time still more precisely : “ As English economic life depended on sea trade, the only means of getting at it was to overcome the fleet, or get past it. The former meant the destruction of the fleet, which, in view of our relative strength, was not possible. . . . The U-boats, however, could get past the fleet.”

Here, discreetly but clearly expressed, is the most important part of the truth about the battle. It was afterwards put rather more frankly by other officers and critics—by Captain von Hase, for instance, in his *Two White Nations* (Part II, p. 41), by Admiral von Capelle (Secretary to the Navy), by Captain Persius in the *Berliner Tageblatt*, and no doubt by many others when speaking in private. The German Fleet’s “ enterprise ” was “ frustrated by the battle of Jutland. . . . Jellicoe did not for an instant surrender the command of the sea. The battle netted us a great number of cripples which most urgently needed repairs ”; and “ the losses sustained by our Fleet were enormous . . . and on June 1, 1916, it was clear to everyone of intelligence that this fight would be, and must be, the only one to take place. Those in authority have often admitted this openly.” That was, of course, later, when the actual pressure of our blockade was inevitably necessitating the extreme policy to which Admiral Scheer had been more immediately converted. But there can be no doubt that the date of the change is the date of Admiral Scheer’s first summary ; it was the morrow of Jutland.

The battle therefore, though in a wholly unexpected way, had proved to be a turning point in the war at sea. Neither side now looked for a decision by a meeting between the two fleets ; both were compelled to face a contest of a different kind, which must inevitably prove fatal to one or the other. The preliminary operations of this final struggle had already taken place, but their significance had not yet been realised. Our weapon was the Blockade of Germany, the pressure of which was gradual and cumulative ; the enemy’s was the U-boat attack, which had already caused us loss, but had not yet become dangerous. If it should be developed, by a desperate effort, to the utmost pitch of intensity, we should be faced

<sup>1</sup> Scheer, p. 169.

by the possibility of so great and rapid a loss of shipping as would starve us and our armies before our enemy collapsed under our grip. The launching of this effort by our enemies, its alarming immediate success, the repulse of it by new methods of protection and of counter-attack, the fierce and continuous fighting of two huge fleets whose ships were numbered by hundreds and their losses by millions of tons, the destruction, the endurance, the breathless anxiety, prolonged not for hours or days but for many months incessantly—all this will make up the story of a single naval operation, the decisive battle of the war, the greatest sea fight in history.

*Professional Opinion.*

The Admiralty and the Commander-in-Chief were equally anxious to get a considered professional opinion upon every aspect of the battle. Almost as soon as the fleet returned to harbour, Admiral Jellicoe appointed committees of gunnery, torpedo and signalling experts to report upon the manner in which the fleet material had stood the test. As soon as the Admiralty received the despatches of the Commander-in-Chief, they put them into the hands of expert departments for examination. The committees of the Grand Fleet and the Departmental Staffs of the Admiralty were only concerned with technical matters; questions of leadership and naval policy were dealt with exclusively by Admirals Jellicoe and Beatty, the First Sea Lord, Sir Henry Jackson, and the Director of Naval Construction, Sir Eustace d'Eyncourt.

Neither the Commander-in-Chief nor Admiral Beatty had any hesitation in saying that the real significance of the battle was the destruction of the battle cruisers. It was, indeed, without historical precedent that a force of the first line, like Admiral Beatty's battle cruiser fleet, should be so severely damaged by a numerically weaker squadron. Admiral Jellicoe spoke of it as the disturbing feature of the action; and Admiral Beatty asked that a committee of scientific men should be sent to Rosyth without delay to investigate the causes of the disasters.

If Admiral Beatty had by then formed any opinion about the loss of his battle cruisers, he did not express it. He merely stated the problem as it stood: three British ships had exploded when hit, German ships had not done so even under the severest punishment. Admiral Jellicoe was more outspoken, and attributed the disasters to the "indifferent armour protection of the battle cruisers."

His view was shared by Captain Dreyer, one of the great experts on fleet gunnery, who made out a technical minute upon Admiral Beatty's letter.

The fleet and squadronal committees on gunnery were rather painfully impressed by the extraordinary rapidity with which the German gunners had got the range of our ships; and drew up a long list of recommendations for improving and renewing our range-finding instruments and for revising our own system of salvo firing. These were recommendations on points of detail; the general conviction in the fleet seems to have been that the disasters of the day were not likely to recur, if the magazines and handing-rooms could be made more secure against explosions caused by jets of flame coming down the ammunition hoists at enormous temperatures and under high pressure.

Experts were also convinced that the fuzes to our shells would have to be re-designed upon a new principle.<sup>1</sup> The type of fuze used during the battle was extraordinarily sensitive, and mere impact with the water had frequently been sufficient to burst the shells. Some fuze was needed which, like the German, would detonate shells after they had penetrated the hull of their target. On this point the Admiralty and fleet experts were absolutely agreed, and experiments with a new design of fuze were at once taken in hand by the Ordnance Committee.

Although the Admiralty at once endorsed the technical findings of the fleet committees, they were slower in making up their minds upon the major problems of the battle; and it was not until Sir Eustace d'Eyncourt had examined the despatches that discussion was focussed upon the vital issues. Sir Eustace then at once drew attention to the gravity of Admiral Jellicoe's remarks. If the Commander-in-Chief's view was accepted, the guiding principle of British warship design would have to be reversed, and the designs of the new battleships *Renown* and *Repulse* reconsidered.

The fundamental maxim of British warship design had been that the best defence is a superior power of offence, but it was not possible to adhere to this and at the same time allot a greater proportion of a ship's total tonnage to armour protection. Sir Eustace carefully examined the reports of all the ships' captains who had witnessed the disasters to the battle cruisers, and decided that the explosions had been caused by the method of transporting charges to the guns, and that the remedy lay in altering the whole routine of the gun drill. In his opinion, there was nothing

<sup>1</sup> See Vol. III., p. 337.

in the available data which would justify a departure from the existing Admiralty building policy. After a long and exceedingly technical discussion, the Board agreed with Sir Eustace d'Eyncourt. A letter was sent to the Commander-in-Chief telling him that the Admiralty had taken immediate and far-reaching steps to make armoured ships less subject to explosion, and then added : "Having given careful consideration to the reports available to them, My Lords are forced to the conclusion that, in some of the ships engaged in the action of May 31, the precautions necessary to the safety of the cordite cartridges were, to a certain extent, subordinated to the great desire, necessarily felt, to achieve a rapid rate of fire. My Lords consider that the stringent instructions and measures, cautionary and protective, which have now been instituted, will have the effect of safeguarding charges and sensibly diminishing the risk of explosion."

This then was the verdict of the existing Board upon the loss of the battle cruisers. Their "far-reaching" measures against explosion are that mass of technical improvements and alterations which, taken together, constitute what is known as "post-Jutland design." The Board's immediate judgment upon the disasters of the battle was therefore that they were the outcome of defects which could be made good, and that they could not be attributed to the design and construction of the battle cruisers.

Now that all the relevant facts are known, there can be little doubt that the remedies suggested by the fleet committees were sufficient to ensure against a repetition of the disasters, and that the Board of Admiralty were right in deciding that the basic principles of British warship design needed no revision. The figures and narratives published by the German Admiralty are an extraordinary testimony to the gunnery standards of the British battle fleet. We now know that during the brief, interrupted action between the main fleets some fifty shells from the British battle squadrons struck the German battle cruisers, and that, during the same period, no fewer than twenty-six shells from Admiral Jellicoe's battleships found their mark in the leading ships of the German line.<sup>1</sup> These results were not obtained in a regular gun duel, but from spasmodic bursts of

<sup>1</sup> See The German Official History (*Der Krieg zur See 1914-18. Nordsee* Band V, p. 477). The German battle cruisers were hit seventy times in all; from the narrative it appears that fifty of these hits occurred during the battleship action. The 5th Battle Squadron were responsible for about half of the remaining twenty. The surviving British battle cruisers were hit twenty-eight times by large projectiles.

fire against targets which loomed for a few minutes out of the North Sea mist and disappeared into it again, and must certainly rank as an achievement which Admiral Hipper's gunners, in their best moments, could hardly equal.

### *The Effect on Fleet Tactics.*

On September 11 Admiral Jellicoe issued a revised set of Orders and Instructions relating to battle tactics; and on October 17 he sent out a memorandum entitled "Notes on the defence of the battle fleet against torpedo attack." These memoranda are perhaps the most important documentary records of the immediate effect of Jutland upon fleet tactics. Other revised orders were issued, but none bear so clear an impress of the battle and its consequences as these.

The Commander-in-Chief's original battle orders contained two tactical rules which were the first derivatives of his plan of engaging the enemy on approximately parallel courses, in a single deployed line. The first of these rules was that the command was to be entirely centralised in the Commander-in-Chief, the Dreadnought fleet was to keep together, and squadron commanders were not to make independent tactical movements unless expressly ordered to do so. The second rule, equally important in the Commander-in-Chief's plan of battle, was that the destroyer flotillas were to be used defensively until the enemy was beaten by gunfire.

It is very significant that each of these governing rules was reprinted, without alteration, in the new Fleet Orders issued by the Commander-in-Chief on September 11. Obviously, then, no drastic change in our tactical methods was called for as a result of the action. The new instructions were intended to adjust our tactical scheme to the enemy's, and not to alter it in any important particular. The enemy had successfully employed evasive tactics, and the Commander-in-Chief in his new instructions was making out a detailed answer to a single question: How could we give effect to our plan of overwhelming the enemy by gunfire in the teeth of his intention to throw it out by a determined use of his torpedo armament and flotillas?

Analysis showed that if our battle line were subjected to a general torpedo attack from the opposing line, the extent of the danger and the point most threatened would vary; and that, as a rule, the van squadron would be more immune than the centre and rear, and would always be in a better

position for closing the range. In his revised orders Admiral Jellicoe drew attention to this, and stated that independent action on the part of the van commander might therefore be necessary during a fleet engagement. This was a first departure from the principle of treating the battle line as a single unit, formed and manœuvred by the fleet commander.

Admiral Jellicoe next dealt with the enemy's method of combining a flotilla attack with an evasive tactical movement. Nothing that had occurred during May 31 had caused him to alter his views on this very difficult question. If the enemy adopted these tactics, immediate pursuit was impossible; but this inability to pursue vigorously was only absolute if the whole line were manœuvred together. If it were admitted that, in certain conditions, squadrons could break the continuity of the line, the case was different. In these circumstances, as in the previous case of a general torpedo attack from the enemy's whole line, the van would probably be far less menaced than the centre and rear, and it might be of very great advantage if the van squadron followed the enemy's evasive movement closely, and kept the head of his line under gunfire. The Commander-in-Chief therefore made express provision for this independent action on the part of one or more of his squadron commanders, and this was perhaps the most significant part of the new instructions. Analysis and examination had evidently proved to the Commander-in-Chief that the constituent parts of a battle line could only be kept together at a great sacrifice of other tactical advantages.

The battle thus caused no radical change in construction, fleet tactics or administration. It caused every officer in a responsible position to make a thorough investigation of existing methods; but its results did not prove that we had been at fault upon any main question of policy or leadership. Admittedly great changes took place in the fleet between June 1916 and October 1918; the phrases "post-Jutland ships," "post-Jutland gunnery" and "post-Jutland tactics" may even seem to suggest that the battle produced a kind of revolution in naval methods. But naval men are not so inventive as to be capable of altering their methods radically upon the doubtful and confusing results of a brief, indecisive action fought in a North Sea haze in failing daylight. Jutland was a turning point, and not a revolution: it caused changes in material and tactics and administration which altered no basic principle. The changes were the first of a series which, taken as a whole, amounts to something of a revolution; but Jutland is by no means responsible for all of them.

After Jutland the final submarine campaign gave an immense impetus to many adaptations which exerted a deep influence upon naval warfare, and made their impress upon tactics, material and design. There is an immense difference between the post-Jutland and the pre-Jutland navy; but it is only the less significant portions of the change for which Jutland is responsible.

## CHAPTER II

### HOME WATERS

June to October 1916

RUSSIA had not succumbed outright under the formidable attack of the German armies in 1915; but the problem of assisting her recovery, and so enabling her to take the field again in 1916, was one which caused the Western Allies very great anxiety. For the British Government in particular the question was extremely difficult. Ever since the Russian defeats of the previous year, our Government had been asked to grant credits for the manufacture of immense quantities of material—all which were stated to be urgent and necessary if the Russian armies were to take part in the next summer's campaign. The British Government could not accede to all these demands without prejudicing the financial engagements already entered into with other Allied Governments; but there could be no question of curtailing or refusing the Russian orders without first coming to an understanding with the Russian Ministers. It was felt that a great effort should be made to tide over this emergency without causing heart-burning or friction; and it was decided, out of courtesy and consideration for a hard pressed and loyal ally, to send some envoy of the highest rank to Russia, who could explain, from a full knowledge of their financial and military policy, that British credits were being granted to each ally in the way which seemed most likely to benefit the united campaign of the Allies. Lord Kitchener seemed to be more fitted than any other member of the Government for such a Mission. His prestige and status in foreign countries were almost as great as at home: he could speak with full authority upon the campaign to be undertaken during the year, and upon the best way of giving cohesion and force to the Allied effort. Before any decision was taken his name was mentioned to the Tsar, who at once expressed his anxiety to meet him by sending Lord Kitchener a cordial personal telegram. Obviously then no better choice could be made; and on May 26, Lord Kitchener declared himself ready to go to Russia at the head of a military and financial Mission.

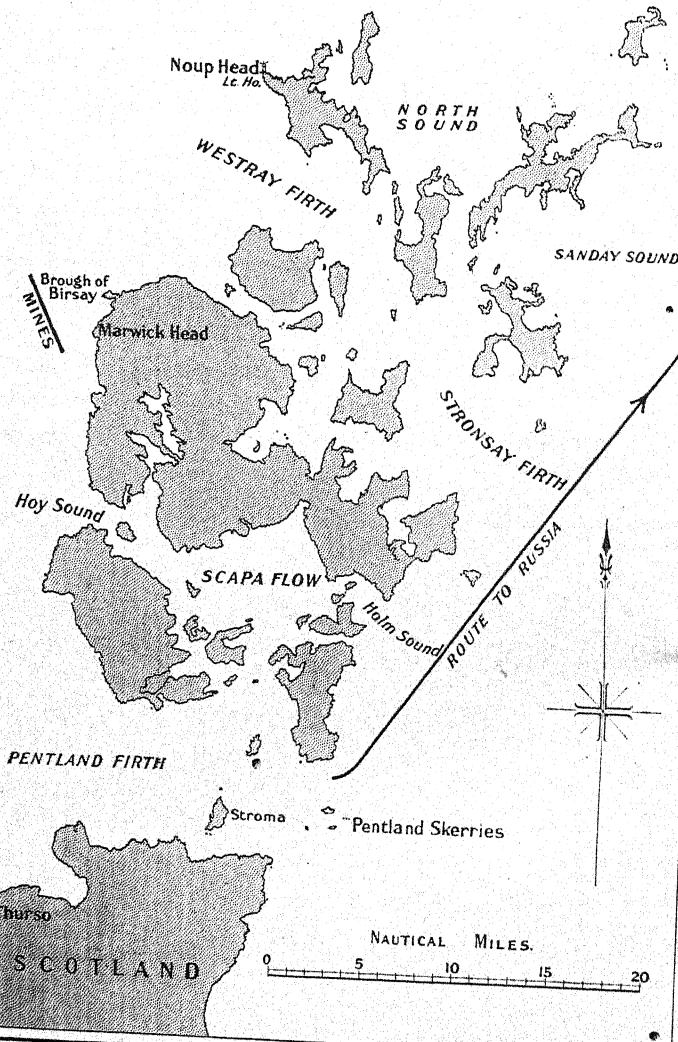
The Admiralty at once ordered the Commander-in-Chief at Scapa to make arrangements for conveying the War Minister and his staff to Archangel. The party arrived at Scapa on the 5th of June, in time to lunch with Sir John Jellicoe; and during the afternoon were taken on board the *Hampshire* (Captain H. J. Savill), which had been ordered to convey them.<sup>1</sup>

When the cruiser was due to start, the weather was extremely bad and a gale was blowing from the north-east. The Commander-in-Chief had to choose from three possible routes for the *Hampshire's* outward voyage. The first of these, which her Captain was directed to follow by the Sailing Orders issued to him on June 4, ran along the eastern coasts of the Orkneys to latitude 62° N. The Commander-in-Chief decided that it ought not to be used: during the previous week submarines had been twice reported near the track that the *Hampshire* would follow: the eastern side of the Orkneys was exposed to the full force of the gale which was blowing; the destroyer escort would not be able to keep up with the cruiser in the heavy seaway, and would in consequence be unprotected against attacks from any submarine that might still be about. It was, in Admiral Jellicoe's opinion, equally inadvisable to send the *Hampshire* out along the second route, which ran through the Pentland Firth to Cape Wrath, and thence northwards. During the morning a submarine had been reported off Cape Wrath, and the sweepers working on the route had been so hampered by the gale that they had not been able to sweep the channel thoroughly by the time the *Hampshire* was due to sail. The third route, which ran close along the west side of the Orkneys was a track ordinarily used by fleet auxiliaries: and this was the one which the Commander-in-Chief, after a good deal of thought, decided to be the best for the *Hampshire* to follow. In the prevailing weather conditions this route was less exposed than the other two and the destroyers would in consequence be better able to keep close up to the cruiser. Besides this there were other reasons. No minefield was known to have been laid so far north as this since the *Moewe's* raid, at the end of the previous year; submarine minelayers had never yet operated off the fleet base; and seeing how short is the night in the Orkneys at midsummer, it was not thought likely that a surface minelayer had been at work.

<sup>1</sup> The party included Brig.-Gen. W. Ellershaw, Lieut.-Col. O. A. G. Fitzgerald, Military Secretary, Mr. H. J. O'Brien, of the Foreign Office, Sir H. F. Donaldson, and Mr. L. S. Robertson, of the Ministry of Munitions, and 2nd Lieut. R. D. Macpherson.



## LOSS OF THE HAMPSHIRE.



PREPARED IN THE HISTORICAL SECTION OF THE COMMITTEE OF IMPERIAL DEFENCE.

[To face p. 21.]

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At a quarter to five, then, on the evening of June 5 the *Hampshire* got under way; an hour later the destroyers *Unity* and *Victor* met her off Tor Ness. Captain Savill's orders were to keep close in to the lee of the land and to steam at 19 knots. The wind soon backed into the north and west, and, as the head sea which it raised was too much for the destroyers, Captain Savill ordered them back and reduced speed.

At about 7.40, whilst the *Hampshire* was driving into the heavy seas, there was an explosion which seemed to tear the centre of the ship right out, and in a few minutes she went down with almost her entire company. Some of the few survivors stated that they saw a group of military men in the gun room flat, just after the explosion, another that he heard voices crying out "make way for Lord Kitchener," and another that Captain Savill's last anxiety was to get him into the galley. But beyond this nothing can ever be known.

As soon as news of the disaster came through to the Commander-in-Chief, four of the Grand Fleet destroyers were ordered out; they were followed by five others, but all hopes of saving life were vain. By the time the destroyers and patrol vessels reached the spot there was hardly a trace of wreckage; fourteen men had reached the shore on Carley rafts, but two of them died before the rescue parties on the cliffs could reach them.

The *Hampshire* went down about a mile and a half from the shore, between the Brough of Birsay and Marwick Head.<sup>1</sup> It is one of the wildest parts of the coast, where a dark rampart of cliffs rises sheer out of the foam and spray which storm against the wind-beaten shore line. On the summit of the brough, overlooking the spot where the *Hampshire* sank, there is a mound of raised earth; and this some

<sup>1</sup> The *Hampshire* had struck one or more mines in a field laid by Lieutenant-Commander Kurt Beitzen from U 75 on the night of May 28/29. U 75 was one of the German submarines detailed to watch the British bases during the German fleet's sortie before Jutland. The German Official History (*Der Krieg zur See, Nordsee* Band V, pp. 201-2) shows that Kurt Beitzen laid his mines in the hope of interfering with the British fleet's concentration if it should leave harbour to meet the German High Seas Fleet: "It then cleared up, and at about 1.10 a.m. Noup Head light was sighted. It had been ascertained that a route used by warships ran about two miles from the coast to the south of this point, i.e., Noup Head, between Marwick Head and the Brough of Birsay; and U 75 was to mine it. This was done. Between 6.0 and 8.35 a.m. the cargo of twenty-two mines was laid in several detached groups, about seven metres below high water, after which she returned home; there was no interference whatever from the enemy's patrols." (For full details see Admiralty Official Narrative: The Loss of H.M.S. *Hampshire*. Cmd. 2710, 1926.)

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believe to be the tomb of a warrior long since dead, the ruler of a race who raised vast monoliths to the sun and moon. Kitchener too had long been a legendary hero of his people, and in their time of need he had by the mere sound of his voice called armies into being. But they mourned him, as they mourned all their losses, without despair, without even the lassitude of grief.

As we have seen, the first business of the Commander-in-Chief on returning from Jutland was to set machinery for controlling the North Sea in motion again as soon as possible; and two days after his reorganisation had been approved and carried out, the usual routine of cruiser sweeps began afresh.<sup>1</sup> Our light squadrons were out four times during the month, and returned on each occasion with "nothing to report." False alarms about escaping raiders occasionally brought out our cruisers, or altered the dispositions of the 10th Cruiser Squadron; but towards the end of the month it seemed as though the long monotony of expectation had settled down once more upon Scapa Flow.

At the southern end of the North Sea, the enemy was more active. Early in the month, the Admiralty got news that the 2nd German Destroyer Flotilla had been sent to Zeebrugge, and they concluded, quite rightly, that the reinforcement was intended to menace, and if possible to raid, our communications with Holland and our shipping in the Downs. It seemed, indeed, that the Germans were going to begin at once, for early in the morning of June 8, twelve destroyers appeared to the east of Dunkirk, and were engaged by the monitor *Lord Clive* and the "Tribal" destroyers on patrol. The Germans turned back before the Harwich forces could reach them, and did not repeat the experiment for more than a month; but the warning sufficed. The Admiralty ordered Commodore R. Y. Tyrwhitt (Commodore (T.)) to detach two light cruisers and eight destroyers as a permanent reinforcement for the Dover patrol. The forces in the Flanders Bight, which was later to become a theatre of fierce raiding and counter-raiding, were now distributed between three points: Dover, Dunkirk and Harwich. At Harwich was the 5th Light Cruiser Squadron (five ships); the 9th Destroyer Flotilla (*Undaunted*, *Lightfoot* and twenty-one "L" class destroyers), and the 10th (*Aurora*, *Nimrod* and fifteen "M" class de-

<sup>1</sup> The 1st Light Cruiser Squadron carried out a sweep from Rosyth on the 14th.

The 3rd Light Cruiser Squadron carried out sweeps from Scapa on the 21st and from Rosyth on the 29th.

The 4th Light Cruiser Squadron carried out a sweep from Scapa on the 25th.

stroyers). The 1st Flotilla (eight boats)—based on Harwich—was permanently attached to the 3rd Battle Squadron. The Dover Force consisted of the light cruiser *Attentive*, the flotilla leader *Swift*, twenty-four destroyers, eight patrol or "P" boats and fourteen monitors. The Dunkirk Force had to be made up from the Harwich and Dover flotillas, and generally consisted of four to eight destroyers. The total force nominally available for the defence of the Downs and the Flanders Bight was thus eight light cruisers, three flotilla leaders, sixty-eight destroyers, eight "P" boats and fourteen monitors; but, owing to the constant refits of the destroyers, and the periodic, uncertain calls for reinforcements in the Channel, whenever submarines were reported to be operating vigorously, the available striking force very rarely exceeded thirty destroyers and four light cruisers. The Commodore was thus already seriously burdened and hampered; and a new and arduous duty was about to be imposed upon him.

It is a matter of common knowledge that the German submarine campaign was an answer to our blockade; but it is not so well realised that, in almost every detail and every incident of these two measures of war—sinking at sight, and cutting off supplies by naval and economic means—two very different forces, the force of terrorism and the force of orderly, lawful pressure, are to be seen arrayed against each other and struggling for mastery. The British Government was now (June 1916) about to conclude a trading agreement which, it was hoped, would divert a considerable volume of Dutch trade from Germany to Great Britain. In order to prevent the agreement from being made useless by an outburst of raiding from Zeebrugge, the Admiralty decided to keep the whole route to the Dutch harbours under permanent patrol. Towards the end of the month this new duty had been taken up. A force of from five to ten destroyers and two light cruisers was generally allotted to it, and the route kept under their inspection ran roughly from the Sunk to the Schouwen Bank and thence to the Maas. The patrol undoubtedly saved the Dutch traffic from serious interference; but, on the other hand, the enemy's submarine minelaying increased in intensity. There were now fifteen submarines in the Flanders Flotilla operating as mine-layers and commerce raiders in the Channel and the Flanders Bight. Political uncertainties had for the moment confined serious operations against commerce to the Mediterranean; but the relations between Berlin and Washington resulted in no restraint upon minelaying. The approaches to Lowestoft were particularly visited during the month. Fifty mines were

swept up by the local sweepers; but eight merchantmen and an armed trawler fell victims.

This was roughly the position when, towards the end of the month, the Commander-in-Chief visited the Admiralty to discuss the battle of Jutland. Those present at the conference seem to have agreed that our dispositions had stood the test as well as could be expected. The disasters which had occurred were attributed to technical faults of material and design, and the decisions practically amounted to a vote of confidence in the Commander-in-Chief's leadership and policy.

Earlier in the year, the fleet had put to sea, with some chance of meeting the enemy, in February, when the *Arabis* was sunk; in March, when we tried to attack the air-sheds on the Schleswig coast; and in April, when Yarmouth and Lowestoft were bombarded. On each occasion, the Commander-in-Chief had sent the 5th Battle Squadron ahead of the battle fleet, with orders to support the battle cruisers or to cover our detached forces. The conference confirmed this policy, and decided that the 5th Battle Squadron was to be considered mainly as a fast wing division of the battle fleet, and not as a portion of the battle cruiser fleet. It was realised that, on occasions, the Commander-in-Chief might think it advisable to reinforce the battle cruisers with the 5th Battle Squadron; if he did so, it was to be understood that the battleships were "simply a reinforcement."

In order to ensure to the Commander-in-Chief a greater measure of control over the units of his fleet, it was decided that, "where the initiative lay with us, the battle cruisers should not be advanced so far in front of the battle fleet as had been customary in the past." The words "where the initiative lay with us" obviously limit the application of this rule to minelaying operations and cruiser sweeps, supported by the battle fleet; and do not apply to the Commander-in-Chief's orders for the battle cruiser fleet on May 31, when the enemy, and not ourselves, had the initiative. In cases of the kind, the Admiralty were prepared to see the battle cruisers used even more freely than they had been by the Commander-in-Chief; for it was decided that, if our eastern or south-eastern coasts were raided, the battle cruisers might have to be pushed forward, without any support at all from the battle fleet. The Admiralty thus closed a discussion which had now lasted many months, by accepting the views of Admiral Jellicoe.

With the spread of German minelaying a pressing need had arisen for better protection of the sweepers working in the

waters to the east of Flamborough Head and the Wash, and for a closer lookout on minelayers and suspicious vessels.

The Admiralty intended to meet this need by establishing the 4th Flotilla, a force of fifteen destroyers, at the Humber; and it was decided that the Commander-in-Chief should use it as a first reinforcement whenever he was operating in the North Sea. There remained, however, the further branch of the problem: the question of co-ordinating the movements of the Harwich Force and the Grand Fleet; and upon this the Admiralty found it very hard to take a decision. They recognised that the Harwich Force ought to co-operate with the Grand Fleet; but in practice there were great difficulties. In the first place, though our system of intelligence sufficed to warn us when the German fleet was putting to sea, it rarely gave us an immediate clue to their plans. Until we could be certain whether the enemy's forces had one, or two, objectives, it was impossible to order Commodore Tyrwhitt to join the Grand Fleet. Again, the enemy's plan might be such that we should risk having the Harwich Force cut off and crushed by ordering it north to join the Grand Fleet; and lastly, there was the fact that the German flotilla in Flanders was steadily expanding. In July 1916, it was believed to consist of twenty-two destroyers, half of which were of the newest pattern. As the Dover flotilla of "Tribal" destroyers could not face this powerful detachment without assistance, the Harwich Force might quite well be needed to secure the Straits in a sudden crisis.<sup>1</sup>

The conference decided, in the end, that the question should be allowed to stand over until the Commander-in-Chief had submitted his proposals.

In his despatch on the battle Admiral Jellicoe had stated that one of the greatest obstacles to bringing the enemy to decisive action was his inability to meet them early in the day.

The conference agreed, and decided that "all arrangements necessary for basing the 1st, 2nd and 5th Battle Squadrons at Rosyth instead of Scapa should be pressed forward with the utmost despatch." When this could be done, the Grand Fleet base would be brought considerably nearer the probable meeting point of the British and German fleets.

Until this became practicable, no re-distribution of the fleet was necessary; the *Sydney* and the *Melbourne* were to be

<sup>1</sup> Their anxiety was fully justified. After the battle, Admiral Scheer seems to have decided to use Zeebrugge as a destroyer training base, and to detach flotillas from the High Seas Fleet with orders to carry on a sort of guerrilla warfare. Scheer, pp. 187-8.

recalled from North America, so as to add two extra vessels of high speed to Admiral Jellicoe's scouting forces; but in other respects it was simply decided to proceed with the reorganisation of the battle squadrons at Scapa, devised two months before the battle.

The Commander-in-Chief urged most strongly that the very poor wireless installation of our submarines should be improved. This question seems at first sight to be a purely technical one, but in reality it touched upon a very much wider problem—the primary duty of our "oversea" submarine flotillas.

Minelaying had now made it impossible to push our patrols right inside the Heligoland Bight, as we had done in the earlier days of the war; but we knew, very accurately, what routes were used by the German fleet when it made sweeps into the North Sea, and were thus able to watch the areas into which the German swept channels debouched.

Our flotillas were therefore patrolling in two groups: four and sometimes five Harwich submarines were stationed along a curved line running from the Texel to the north-eastern corner of the Austern Grund, about seventy-five miles to the west-north-westward of Heligoland; whilst the submarines from Blyth and the Tyne were generally watching the Horn Reefs-Jutland Bank area. The first group was thus patrolling across the line along which the German fleet had advanced when Lowestoft and Yarmouth were bombarded; the second watched the route followed by Admiral Scheer on May 30.

The Admiralty, like the German High Command, had been striving, for a long time, to devise some means of co-ordinating the operations of the submarine flotillas and the battle fleet; for the 11th Flotilla, at Blyth, had originally been created for use in a fleet action, and was under the orders of Admiral Jellicoe. There was, however, a strong contrast between our solution and the enemy's. Admiral Scheer's plan of co-ordinated action between under-water craft and a battle fleet resolved itself into using the submarines for getting early intelligence of our movements. According to our ideas the first duty of our submarines was to inflict loss on the enemy whenever he put to sea; and, though the Commander-in-Chief's representations about their bad wireless equipment were well founded, it is more than doubtful whether a screen of submarines, encircling the German Bight, could have added much to our system of intelligence. In the outcome we continued to use them as detached outposts with a purely offensive rôle.

The decisions of the conference, amounting, as we have seen, to a vote of confidence in the Commander-in-Chief, and to an order to alter little or nothing in our existing dispositions, were a significant anticipation of the estimate which history will inevitably form of the advantage gained or lost by either side in the battle of Jutland. The action was an unfinished experiment, in which two different systems of tactics and commands had come into conflict. In certain highly technical points its lessons were clear and emphatic; in all else it left the naval position unaltered. After the battle, as before it, the Allies enjoyed all the superiority inherent in being able to obtain supplies from foreign markets and to transport and maintain great overseas expeditions; after the battle, as before it, we carried out those sweeps and operations which represented our control of the North Sea; and after the battle, as before it, we strangled German supplies by means of our agreements with neutrals, our economic strength, and our intercepting cruiser squadrons. Of its effect upon German naval policy we shall hear again and at considerable length.

The wisdom of instituting a special patrol for the Dutch route was very soon justified by events. At nine o'clock in the evening of July 22, Commodore Tyrwhitt put to sea with two light cruisers—the *Carysfort* (broad pendant) and the *Canterbury*; and eight "M" class destroyers.<sup>1</sup> As all the ships crossing during the night were coming from or going to the Hook of Holland, the Commodore was only concerned with protecting the route between Felixstowe, the North Hinder and the Maas. He therefore ordered the *Canterbury* and the 2nd Division to watch the route near the North Hinder, whilst he himself took the Maas patrol. The detachments were to arrive at their stations simultaneously, at 2 a.m. No news had come through of any movement by the German flotilla when Commodore Tyrwhitt left harbour.

The Germans had none the less been warned that ships well worth capturing were to cross during the night, and their flotilla left Zeebrugge at about the same time as the Commodore moved out from Harwich. They set a course for the North Hinder, so that contact between the two was practically certain.

<sup>1</sup> The organisation was :

|                |  |              |  |
|----------------|--|--------------|--|
| — 1st Division | $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{Carysfort} \\ \text{Mentor} \\ \text{Mansfield} \\ \text{Mastiff} \\ \text{Manly} \end{array} \right.$ | 2nd Division | $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{Canterbury} \\ \text{Melpomene} \\ \text{Morris} \\ \text{Matchless} \\ \text{Mime} \end{array} \right.$ |
|----------------|--|--------------|--|

After clearing harbour the *Carysfort* and her division, which had forty-five miles further to go, steamed ahead, and the *Canterbury* slowed down. At a quarter-past one, when the Commodore was well past the North Hinder, a group of hostile destroyers was sighted about three miles ahead on a northerly course. The *Carysfort* and her destroyers at once steamed after them at full speed, and the enemy turned to the eastward and made off. There were only three of them, and they obviously could not stand up against such very heavy odds as had been brought against them. The Commodore followed in pursuit and brought them under fire for a few minutes. It was a rainy night, and just as the engagement began a squall passed across the division and practically blotted out the enemy, who made use of the chance, put up a heavy smoke screen and turned sharply to starboard. When the squall had passed and the horizon was clear again, the German destroyers were out of sight.

The Commodore, however, still hoped that they might be caught. He turned to his course for the Maas, and ordered the *Canterbury* and her division to turn to the south-east and try to catch the enemy near the Schouwen Bank. He then took his own division to the Maas to cut off the enemy's retreat if on meeting the *Canterbury* they should turn north again and try to creep in to Emden along the coast. Half an hour before he received the order, Captain Percy Royds had seen the flashes of the *Carysfort's* guns, and had steamed eastwards towards the engagement at 20 knots. When he received the Commodore's order he was just passing the light-vessel; he therefore turned south-easterly and increased to 28 knots. At a quarter to two, when he was about ten miles north-west of the Schouwen Bank, the German destroyers were sighted ahead. Six were now clearly visible; and though steaming at high speed across the Middle Deep for Zeebrugge, they were unable to make good the speed necessary to cross the *Canterbury's* bows out of range. Captain Royds altered to port to close them, and withheld his fire for the next twenty minutes. At ten minutes past two he opened fire at a range of about 5,000 yards; and the enemy at once replied. The *Matchless* was just out of dockyard hands and could not keep up; and Lieutenant H. R. Troup of the *Milne* decided that he must stand by his sub-divisional leader. The result was that the Germans had only two boats to deal with, and so had a fair chance of damaging them, though much over-weighted by the gun-fire of our light cruiser. Just after two o'clock, Captain Royds ordered the *Melpomene* (Lieutenant-Commander Hubert de Burgh) to close in to attack; he did

so with only the *Morris* (Lieutenant-Commander E. S. Graham) in company, and at a quarter-past two both boats were firing rapidly at the end of the enemy's line. In spite of our speed, the enemy had succeeded in getting across our bows, for his line then bore about one point on the *Morris's* starboard bow. Daylight was coming up fast; but the light was not yet strong, and the enemy put up a thick smoke screen, which for several moments made firing impossible. The range was dropping rapidly, and had the chase gone on for much longer our two destroyers would have been the target for the concentrated fire of the whole German division. The *Canterbury* was, by now, some way astern, though well within range. The engagement indeed promised to develop into an interesting tactical contest: would the heavier guns of our light cruiser, fired almost at hazard into a moving smoke screen, be enough to sustain the attack which de Burgh and Graham were trying to press home? Unfortunately the experiment could not be carried through to its conclusion: the boats were now (2.25) five miles past the Schouwen Bank light-vessel, and were thus fast approaching the minefield off Zeebrugge. Captain Royds recalled them, and the flotilla re-formed off the Schouwen Bank light-vessel about a quarter of an hour later.<sup>1</sup>

This short engagement sufficed to show that our dispositions were well adapted for protecting the Dutch route. Warfare in the Flanders Bight was taking on a character of its own. The main fleet movements in the North Sea were practically always to be detected beforehand by observation of enemy wireless activities; so that the Commander-in-Chief generally put to sea with a certain amount of positive intelligence of the enemy's movements. In the south matters were different; some warning of movements between Flanders and the Bight could be obtained by observation of enemy wireless, but the Flanders forces themselves were sufficiently compact and concentrated to be able to put to sea on written or verbal instructions, of which we could get no indication. The consequence was that our counter-dispositions in the Dover Straits and the Flanders Bight had to be made upon that calculation of probable chances, and that provision against all contingencies which was characteristic of the naval warfare of an earlier period. This time our dispositions had undoubtedly stood the test; but it was equally clear that the Zeebrugge flotilla, though too far outnumbered and outclassed to be able to contest our command of the Flanders Bight,

<sup>1</sup> The German official bulletin reported that their destroyers had returned undamaged; the flotilla was recalled to Emden on July 31.

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had none the less a great capacity for mischief, and must be considered in any calculation of forces.

Throughout July the German fleet had given very little sign of activity; but during the first half of August Admiral Scheer completed his plans for a new raid upon the English coast. The fleet was to move across the North Sea during the night of August 18 and to bombard Sunderland on the following morning, "provided that it had not previously become engaged in a fleet action" and that its line of retreat was clear. This laconic statement does not explain whether Admiral Scheer left harbour intending to bring about a fleet action, or to avoid one. Probably he was still nursing his old hope of gaining prestige by a blow at our light forces in the Flanders Bight. His present enterprise might bring him the desired chance: it would in any case be a bold one, and would exasperate British feeling. The operations involved, as before, the risk of meeting the Grand Fleet, and to that risk his courage and self-reliance were equal; but he naturally desired to ensure as far as possible that the meeting should not be forced upon him suddenly, or in circumstances that would make it a fight to a finish. His dispositions show, as clearly as any explicit statement, the nature of the lesson which Jutland had taught him.

On May 31, his reconnaissance system had broken down; he had found himself in the presence of the whole British battle fleet, without the slightest preliminary warning—Admiral Jellicoe had been able to steer unnoticed and undetected through the northern part of the North Sea. The German battle fleet had, in consequence, become engaged at a serious tactical disadvantage; the Commander-in-Chief had never had the time to form his battle line in a position from which his ships could fight satisfactorily; and had spent the best part of the afternoon in *Kehrtwendungen*<sup>1</sup> and extricatory manœuvres. A better system of intelligence was clearly called for. If he could devise some means of obtaining timely warning that Admiral Jellicoe's squadrons were advancing against him, of knowing the direction of their approach and the time of their arrival, some of the difficulties in which he had been involved need not be repeated. To secure the freedom of manœuvre which was essential to him, if he were to carry out his plan without being surprised, as he had been on the afternoon of May 31, he decided to organise his submarines, airships and reconnaissance forces into successive lines of intelligence outposts.

He therefore arranged that, when he reached the English

<sup>1</sup> See Vol. III., p. 369.

coast, his flanks should be covered by two groups of submarines, called U-boat lines numbers I and III, stationed at about thirty and sixty miles on either side of the line of advance. A third group, formed from the Zeebrugge flotillas, was to take position on two separate lines in the approaches to the Flanders Bight, to the north-westward of the Texel. Yet another line of five U-boats was stationed across the north-western approach to the bight, at about one hundred and twenty miles from Heligoland.<sup>1</sup> Lines I and III were to serve as a kind of long-distance cover to the main fleet, when it was under the British coast; and the lines off the Texel were intended as a trap for the Harwich forces. Other positions were to be occupied by the submarines as the sweep progressed; and, in order that their movements should be exactly co-ordinated with those of the battle squadrons, the commander of the U-boat flotillas sailed with the fleet in the *Prinzregent Luitpold*.<sup>2</sup>

It was considered essential that the submarines should work in groups, and occupy straight lines, drawn across the most probable line of our advance. The previous system of posting them along the radii of circles drawn opposite our bases had not been satisfactory. When the submarines approached the centre they got bunched together and their movements were cramped; when they moved towards the circumference they were needlessly dispersed, and our squadrons passed through them without being molested.<sup>3</sup>

These dispositions would suffice to protect him against surprise whilst he was actually engaged in operations against the coast; but he had still to cover himself whilst he was moving across the North Sea. For this he depended upon his airships, and he ordered eight Zeppelins to take up special stations when the fleet made its advance.<sup>4</sup> The *L 30*, *L 32*, *L 24*, and *L 22* were to patrol between Peterhead and Norway; *L 31* was to watch the Firth of Forth; *L 11* was to take station off Sunderland; *L 21* to cruise over the Outer Silver Pit between the Humber and the Wash; and *L 13* to watch the Flanders Bight. By thus encircling the outer end of his advance with airships, Admiral Scheer was confident of early news of the approach of "strong sections of the British fleet" if they advanced against him.

<sup>1</sup> The U-boat lines were constituted as follows: *Detachment north-east of Blyth* (Line I): *U 44*, *U 67*, *U 65*, *U 52*, *U 53*. *Detachment east of Flamborough Head* (Line III): *U 63*, *U 49*, *U 45*, *U 66*, *U 64*. *Swarke Bank detachment* (Flanders Line 1): *UB 39*, *UB 23*, *UB 18*, *UB 29*. *Terschelling Bank detachment* (Flanders Line 2): *UB 37*, *UB 19*, *UB 16*, *UB 6*, *UB 12*. *Heligoland Bight detachment*: *U 48*, *U 69*, *UB 35*, *U 55*, *U 56*.

<sup>2</sup> See Map I.      <sup>3</sup> Scheer, pp. 179-80.      <sup>4</sup> Scheer, Map 10.

Before sailing he reorganised his fleet. The 2nd Battle Squadron had already been discarded as unfit for heavy fighting, "on account of its artillery and old type of torpedo." Some compensation for this sacrifice was supplied by the newly completed battleships *Bayern*, *Grosser Kurfürst* and *Märkgraf*; but they were not available as reinforcements for the main fleet. The battle cruiser squadron which had lost the *Lützow* at Jutland, was also lacking the *Derfflinger* and *Seydlitz*, still in dockyard hands: the *Moltke* and the *Von der Tann* alone could not be used to oppose the five British ships of the same class, and still less the 5th Battle Squadron, which was believed, though erroneously, to be now attached to our advanced forces. Admiral Scheer therefore attached his three new ships to Hipper's remnant, and left himself with only eighteen battleships as against Admiral Jellicoe's twenty-eight.

At nine o'clock, then, on the evening of the 18th, his 1st and 3rd Battle Squadrons left harbour, preceded by the two scouting groups. The distance between the advanced cruiser squadrons and the battle fleet was reduced to twenty miles, in order to make quite sure that the battleships attached to the 1st Scouting Group could join up rapidly with the battle squadrons in an emergency.

During the forenoon of the 18th, we discovered, by the usual signs, that the German fleet was likely to leave harbour, and at 10.30 the Commander-in-Chief and the Vice-Admiral commanding the battle cruiser fleet were ordered to raise steam. At five minutes to eleven they were ordered to proceed to sea and concentrate in the Long Forties, as the German fleet was apparently on the point of sailing.

The situation was strongly reminiscent of the train of events which had preceded Jutland, in that enemy submarines were evidently at sea in considerable force; and at one o'clock the Admiralty sent out a further wire stating that six submarines had been located during the forenoon. The first was about ninety-five miles to the W.N.W. of Horn Reefs; the second and third were on the Dogger Bank; the other three were spread over the northern part of the Austern Grund. The telegram ended with the warning: "there may be others."

We could, therefore, only estimate the meaning of the enemy's sortie by its analogy with the last, as we had no idea what direction it was going to take, and his submarines were so widely spread that they gave no indication of the general plan. Slight as the information was, we got no more for the next fifteen hours; and, in the meantime, we had felt compelled to set the whole of our forces in motion.

When the telegram giving the order to put to sea arrived at Scapa, Admiral Jellicoe was lying sick in the south of Scotland, and Admiral Burney was in charge of the Grand Fleet. The *Royalist* was, however, at Dundee, waiting to take the Commander-in-Chief north whenever needed, and as soon as news of the intended movement reached him he embarked, and made off to join the Grand Fleet.

In the meantime, Admiral Burney felt that he would hardly be justified in taking the fleet across the North Sea while the enemy's intentions were so obscure. He therefore ordered a general fleet rendezvous in Lat.  $56^{\circ} 30' N.$ , Long.  $0^{\circ} 20' E.$ , about 100 miles to the E.N.E. of the Firth of Forth, for five o'clock on the following morning; and gave orders for the battle cruisers to assemble thirty miles to the south at the same hour. Both fleets were then to turn to the southwards, and enter the southern part of the North Sea through "L" channel. He also ordered the Blyth submarines to assemble 50 miles eastward of Hartlepool, to cover the approaches to the Tyne-Whitby district; with a special warning that they were not to spread too far apart, and were to be ready to join the Grand Fleet if necessary.

The *Active* and nine destroyers left Immingham at 10 p.m. on the 18th, whilst seven submarines left Blyth at the same hour to carry out the orders given.

We had, at the time, three submarines watching the Bight : *E 23*, *H 5* and *H 9* were patrolling the western approaches to the Ems. After ascertaining how many of our submarines were off the German coasts, the Admiralty ordered two more to be sent "to the north of Heligoland." *E 38* and *E 16* had left Harwich at about half-past twelve, with orders to take up their stations along the swept channel which ran from the Amrum Bank to the west of Heligoland. After thus completing what might be called our North Sea measures, we made the following preparations for facing an attack in the Flanders Bight.

(i) The 3rd Battle Squadron was ordered to assemble in the Swin and have steam at one hour's notice by 8 p.m.; and the minelayers *Biarritz* and *Paris* were ordered to proceed to the fleet anchorage and place themselves at the disposal of the Vice-Admiral.

(ii) Captain A. K. Waistell (Captain (S)) was ordered to station six submarines off Lowestoft, Yarmouth and Harwich, and then to send a group to a position about midway between Lowestoft and the Dutch coast, and another group to the ~~Corten~~ light-vessel. The *Firedrake* and six submarines sailed for the first rendezvous at about a quarter to one on the

morning of the 19th; the *Hind* and three others left a little later for the Cordon.

(iii) Commodore Tyrwhitt was ordered to "be on the lookout at Brown Ridge by early dawn" on the 19th; and left harbour at 10.30 p.m. on the 18th in the *Carysfort*, with the 5th Light Cruiser Squadron, the *Lightfoot* and eighteen destroyers of the "L" and "M" classes in company.

As a result of these orders, our counter-measures were in full progress two hours after the German fleet had sailed.

The Grand Fleet put to sea during the afternoon of the 18th; further south, the battle cruisers left the Firth of Forth at about half-past eight, while the ships in Cromarty left harbour at about a quarter to six, and steered straight for the general rendezvous.<sup>1</sup>

When he left Scapa, Admiral Burney ordered the *Iron Duke* to advance ahead of the fleet and take the Commander-in-Chief on board from the *Royalist*, which was coming up to meet the battle squadrons. But just before eight, as the *Iron Duke* and the *Royalist* were approaching the rendezvous, the *Onslaught*, one of the screening destroyers, was attacked by a submarine at very close range. The torpedo missed; and the *Iron Duke* continued on her course until Admiral Jellicoe was taken on board.

As the fleet was due to pass right over the danger spot about an hour later, Admiral Burney opened out his columns and gave the position where the submarine had made the attack a five-mile berth. At about nine o'clock the fleet passed the danger spot in two divisions, one to the north and one to the south of it. At ten o'clock, when the fleet was about seventy miles to the E.S.E. of the Pentland Firth, a

<sup>1</sup> The fleet was one battleship and five light cruisers short of its full establishment, and was thus distributed:

#### *At Scapa.*

The 1st Battle Squadron (less *Benbow*).

2nd      "      "      (less *Centurion* and *Monarch*).

5th      "      "      full complement.

4th      "      "      full complement of battleships, but attached light cruiser *Blonde* absent.

2nd Cruiser Squadron (less *Minotaur*, *Devonshire* and *Donegal*).

4th Light Cruiser Squadron (less *Caroline*, *Constance* and *Cambrian*).

XI<sup>th</sup>, XII<sup>th</sup> and XIV<sup>th</sup> Flotillas.

#### *At Ivergordon.*

*Minotaur*, *Benbow* and *Monarch*.

#### *At Rosyth.*

The Battle Cruiser Fleet, less the *Indomitable* of the 2nd Battle Cruiser Squadron and the *Yarmouth* of the 3rd Light Cruiser Squadron 1st and XIII<sup>th</sup> Flotillas.

southerly course was set for the general rendezvous. Our main squadrons were thus taken past the outer cordon of watching Zeppelins unobserved, during the dark hours.

Further south, Admiral Beatty steered to the eastward during the night, with his light cruisers spread to the southward of him. At twenty minutes past three, when about 120 miles to the E.S.E. of the Firth of Forth, he turned sixteen points, and by five o'clock was at his rendezvous, thirty miles ahead of the battle fleet. He then turned to the southward and approached "L" channel at 18 knots, on a course which took the starboard wing of his screen straight towards the outer end of the U-boat line to the north-east of Blyth.

It was daylight between four and five; but the morning was very hazy. At about half-past five, a small sail was sighted right ahead of the *Dublin*. The navigator, who took it for a small fishing-boat, lost sight of it a few minutes later, and thought that the movement of the ship had obscured it behind some part of the upper works. This was unfortunate, for he had actually sighted *U 52* manœuvring into an attacking position; and twenty-four minutes later the *Nottingham* was shaken by two violent explosions.

Although one of the torpedoes fired had been seen from the *Dublin*, which was working with the *Nottingham* on the screen, Captain C. B. Miller had sighted nothing, and thought that his ship had struck a mine. Neither of the two ships was in touch with the next groups on the screen, and it was not until half an hour after the disaster that the news was received by Admiral Beatty, who at once detached the destroyers *Penn* and *Oracle*.

The *Nottingham* remained on an even keel, but her fires and lights were put out; the vessel was thus without power of manœuvre, with everything below the upper deck in darkness. The *Dublin* strove to keep down the submarine; but was herself attacked, and at twenty-five minutes past six another torpedo struck the *Nottingham* on the port side. Captain Miller had, by then, got his crew into the boats; and about ten minutes before the ship went down the two destroyers arrived and helped in the work of rescue, although they were, in their turn, attacked. At ten minutes past seven the *Nottingham* sank, and the weather was, at the time, so thick that the *Dublin* was out of touch with her. It was not till seven o'clock that the Commander-in-Chief received the report that she had been hit.<sup>1</sup>

In the meantime, the density of the haze had already

<sup>1</sup> He did not know definitely that she had been torpedoed until two hours later.

suggested the need for unusual precautions. Admiral Jellicoe thought that in the circumstances his battle cruisers were too far ahead, and at six o'clock he ordered Admiral Beatty to close to within signalling distance of the Grand Fleet's advanced cruiser line.

The battle cruiser fleet turned north at a quarter past six to obey the order, and at twenty minutes to seven was in touch with the *Duke of Edinburgh*. Admiral Beatty then turned to his original course, and soon after ordered his advanced light cruisers to close on the centre and steer for "L" channel.

The Commander-in-Chief had at this moment but very slight means of forming an estimate of the enemy's plan. He had witnessed the attack on the *Onslaught* on the previous evening; his wireless room had taken in a message from the s.s. *Harlost* reporting an enemy submarine to the south of him in Lat.  $55^{\circ} 19' N.$ , Long.  $1^{\circ} 3' W.$  (18 miles north-east of Blyth); and he had just heard from the Admiralty that an enemy battleship had been located by directional wireless about 200 miles to the S.E. of him, at twenty-five minutes past five, in Lat.  $54^{\circ} 19' N.$ , Long.  $4^{\circ} 48' E.$  (about 170 miles eastward of the Humber). Beyond this, and the news that the *Nottingham* had been torpedoed or mined—he could not tell which—he knew nothing. Scanty and disjointed as the information was, it seems to have sufficed to warn him that, by pressing straight on, he would walk into the trap which he had long expected the enemy to lay for him; for he turned the whole fleet to the northward at seven o'clock.

It is important that the consequences of this movement should not be exaggerated. Had it never been made, that is, had Admiral Jellicoe pressed on to the southward, his advanced forces might have been in contact with Hipper's squadron between twelve and one; but only on the supposition that the British advance was not held up by the submarines of U-boat line No. 1, and that Admiral Scheer held on for Sunderland, in ignorance of the tremendous force which was steadily approaching his communications with Germany. But it is in the last degree improbable that the German Commander-in-Chief would have known nothing of the whereabouts of our Grand Fleet until it was close upon him; and, when once he knew that it was approaching, he would no doubt have endeavoured to gain time. It is certain that never, if he could possibly have avoided it, would he have joined battle with the Grand Fleet to the eastward of him, and with the prospect of an eight-hours' daylight battle before night could bring him a chance of breaking away.

Apart from all this, Admiral Jellicoe still had time, after turning to the northward, as he did, to bring the enemy to action; the decisive move, which prevented the two fleets from coming to grips, was made later on in the day by his adversary.

The Admiralty's last message, in fact, gave Admiral Jellicoe the impression that he had even more time to spare than was really the case. The German fleet was considerably ahead of the position given, and the only vessel which had actually been located was the *Westfalen*, which was then detached from the fleet, in serious difficulties, caused by a British torpedo.

At three o'clock, just an hour before daylight, Lieutenant-Commander R. R. Turner had been patrolling in *E 23* about sixty miles to the north of Terschelling, on a southerly course, when he became aware that a force of vessels was passing ahead of him, steering west. In contrast to the conditions further north, the weather was clear, with a bright moon, and *E 23* had the good fortune to be right on the track of the advancing German Fleet, in an admirable position for attacking them. The first echelon, which was probably Admiral Boecker with the light cruisers of the 2nd Scouting Group, passed *E 23* safely; but, ten minutes later, Lieutenant-Commander Turner was within shot of Admiral Hipper's battle cruisers, and attacked the leading ship at eight hundred yards. He missed, and was compelled to dive for a quarter of an hour. At half-past three, he rose to the surface, and sighted another group of ships approaching him. An hour later (4.37) he had manœuvred himself into an attacking position, and fired at a ship which he could not identify. His range was then between 4,000 and 5,000 yards, and he missed again; but he sighted another squadron of battleships to the eastward, and at five o'clock fired at the *Westfalen*, the last ship in the enemy's line, and hit her. For two and a half hours he dogged the *Westfalen* in the hope of attacking her again; but though he once fired his two bow tubes, at a range of 1,200 yards, the German destroyers kept him at bay, and got their escort safely back to Wilhelmshaven.

The damage to the *Westfalen* was not a serious matter, and Admiral Scheer continued on his course towards Sunderland, receiving a series of puzzling reports from his Zeppelins and submarines as he went. The movements of our own squadrons must be examined somewhat closely if these reports are to be understood.

Commodore Tyrwhitt had arrived on the Brown Ridge by 3 a.m., and at once began patrolling it at 20 knots. At a

quarter to six he turned from a northerly to a south-south-easterly course; and, a few minutes later, Zeppelin *L 13* was sighted on the port bow. She dogged the Harwich Force for a few minutes, and reported to Admiral Scheer that she had sighted two flotillas and a cruiser squadron steering in company to the south-west. It was not until a quarter to nine that *L 13* was able to get in touch again, and this time she reported three destroyer flotillas and a few light cruisers steering to the north-east.<sup>1</sup> As an account of an isolated fact, this report was sufficiently correct, for the Commodore in order to maintain his station on the Brown Ridge, had turned to the W.S.W. at seven o'clock, and to the N.N.W. at eight. It was on this latter course that he had now been sighted and mistaken for a new detachment. Admiral Scheer's intelligence, therefore, gave him good reason to suppose that we had two distinct groups of light forces in the Flanders Bight, and that each was making for a separate destination.

His news of our other forces was equally disjointed, and baffling. Admiral Jellicoe had turned to the north at seven o'clock. A submarine was reported to the south of him almost as he did so; but beyond this, nothing occurred during his new movement, until the *Galatea*, from her position at the eastern end of the screen of light cruisers covering the retirement of the fleet, sighted and engaged Zeppelin *L 31*. The Zeppelin commander dogged us for a while, and was apparently able to make out the battle fleet ahead of the light cruisers, for he reported that "at 9.50" our main fleet was steering to the north-eastwards from a position Lat.  $55^{\circ} 35' N.$ , Long.  $0^{\circ} 35' E.$  (about eighty miles east-north-east of Blyth); but that he had lost sight of it in the rain squalls.<sup>2</sup> In addition to this, Admiral Scheer knew, from the wireless station at Neumünster, that the Grand Fleet was at sea. He also heard, at about this time, that *U 53*, working on *U*-boat line No. 1, had sighted "three large vessels, and four light cruisers on a northerly course, at ten minutes past eight"; and, soon after, that *U 52* had fallen in with four light cruisers on a northerly course, and had sunk one of them, at seven o'clock.

He could thus be certain that there were considerable forces to the north of him, with apparently two light squadrons, in the Flanders Bight; and as far as he could tell, they were steering away from one another and away from him. These reports, he complains, gave him "no unified picture of the

<sup>1</sup> Scheer, p. 181.

<sup>2</sup> This signal is very difficult to explain, because all our forces had turned to the southward by 9.50.

enemy's counter-measures"; and, as he saw no reason to alter his plan, he held on with the whole fleet towards Sunderland.

Admiral Jellicoe had thus completely screened his movements by his turn north at seven o'clock. He continued the retirement for about two hours, and shortly after nine, as no submarines had been reported in the area through which the fleet was steaming, turned south again and steered for the centre of "L" channel.

To the southward Commodore Tyrwhitt continued to move to and fro on Brown Ridge. Shortly before ten o'clock he received a message from *E 23*, reporting that the enemy's light cruisers, battle cruisers and battle fleet had been met at a spot some 70 miles north-west of the Ems at 9.19 a.m.<sup>1</sup> The time was, of course, quite wrong, as by 9.20 Admiral Scheer had advanced to within 120 miles of Sunderland; but the message, as taken in, showed the Commodore that the High Seas Fleet was to the northward of him, and he at once passed it on to the Commander-in-Chief, and steamed north at 20 knots to get contact with the enemy. As the news only served to convince Admiral Jellicoe that he had ample time to meet the German fleet, he did not alter his dispositions.

The Grand Fleet was not further troubled by submarines; only one was sighted during the next two hours, when the *Penn* reported a U-boat, too far off to be dangerous. On the other hand, Zeppelins were sighted without intermission. To the fleet it seemed as though several of them were hovering about; but, in point of fact, there was only one, *L 11*, which had picked them up as they passed the latitude of Sunderland, and was conscientiously following them. It is surprising that Admiral Scheer received no warning from her until well after noon; on the other hand, the reports received between ten and twelve o'clock from his Zeppelins in the Flanders Bight caused him to alter his whole plan.

It would seem that *L 13*, to which the Flanders Bight area was assigned, had by now got well ahead, for, at eleven o'clock, she was sighted by the Harwich Force as they steamed northwards. The *Conquest* strove to drive her off, without much success, and between twelve and half-past, Admiral Scheer received two messages from the commander of *L 13*, telling him that an enemy force of thirty units, consisting of sixteen destroyers, large and small cruisers and battleships, had been moving towards him, between half-past eleven and

<sup>1</sup> The first signal intercepted by the Commander-in-Chief was even more incorrectly taken in, and gave the enemy's position as Lat. 54° 20' N., Long. 7° E., 70 miles further east and well inside the Heligoland Bight.

noon, from the vicinity of the Swarte Bank. Soon after, *L 13* passed into a mass of thunder-clouds, and so lost touch with our forces before the commanding officer could correct his mistake.

The report that a force of battleships and heavy cruisers were to the south of him had an immediate effect upon Admiral Scheer. It seemed as though there were, within closing distance of him, a force so weak that it would stand no chance if he could meet it, and yet so important that its destruction would be a resounding victory. Everything gave way before the chance thus offered. All thought of bombarding Sunderland was abandoned,<sup>1</sup> and the fleet was turned round to the eastward (12.23) to a course which, Admiral Scheer estimated, would bring him into touch with the enemy to the south of him in about two hours' time. Simultaneously the 2nd Flotilla was sent ahead to carry out a tactical reconnaissance.

His miscalculation was complete. In the first place, the Harwich Force, at which he was endeavouring to strike, consisted of light cruisers and destroyers, which had the heels of him, and not of battleships which could be brought to action; and, in the second, it was no longer there; for Commodore Tyrwhitt, who had seen nothing of the enemy, and had up to noon received no message modifying his original orders, had decided that he ought to return to the station assigned to him. At 12.45 therefore he had turned south, and was now steaming away from the German fleet at 20 knots.

Thus Admiral Scheer was completely misled, but he was misled to his own salvation. The moment before he decided to turn eastward the advanced screen of our battle cruisers must have been about thirty miles from Admiral Hipper's forces; the distance between Admiral Scheer's and Admiral Jellicoe's flagships was about sixty-five miles. Their two fleets were steaming at right angles, so that our advanced screen would probably have been in contact with the rear cruisers of the High Seas Fleet at about half-past two; and unless Admiral Scheer had run for home, a fleet action in our own waters would have opened between four and five. This situation so full of imminent and vital possibilities was changed abruptly, and by the mere chance of a faulty reconnaissance. A Zeppelin commander who had not correctly ascertained the composition of the Harwich Force, and had been prevented by a thunder-storm in the upper air from correcting his mistake, had offered to his Commander-in-Chief

<sup>1</sup> Scheer, p. 182.

an imaginary prey, and by drawing him away from his original objective had given time for him to receive warning of the approaching danger.

To Admiral Jellicoe, on the other hand, it still seemed as though a fleet action was imminent. For nearly three hours he continued to keep to the S.S.E., with his fleet well concentrated. At noon he altered to a course about due south; and twenty minutes later he ordered the *Active* and the 4th Flotilla to join him at three o'clock in a position eighty miles to the east of Sunderland; and to spread the Blyth submarines on a line running north and south from Lat. 55° 00', N. Long. 0° 0' (fifty miles due east of Sunderland).

It is fairly clear that he thought the best means of getting hold of the enemy was not to go too far from their probable objective, the British coast; for at 12.32 he altered course to the westward, so as to pass between the western edge of the Humber minefield and the land. No news was coming in from his advanced forces or from the Admiralty; but, from time to time, his wireless room picked up signals from a fleet sweeper reporting a Zeppelin in the Sunderland area; and the ships round him, and on the screen, were reporting that the enemy's *telefunken* signals were increasing in strength. He in his turn was pursuing a phantom; there was nothing to tell him that all chance of a fleet action which would have ended with anything like a decisive result disappeared when the German fleet turned back at half-past twelve. It is true that if he had adhered to his original plan of advancing down "L" channel<sup>1</sup> he might have got into touch with the enemy late in the afternoon, and might perhaps have fought a tentative and indecisive action in the growing darkness. By one o'clock he was at the edge of the channel; but he decided that he could not pass down it, as the reports received earlier in the day seemed to show that it was held in strength by enemy submarines. He therefore determined to keep on his course and enter the southern part of the North Sea by the alternative "M" channel; and with this decision the last chance of any kind of engagement between the two fleets vanished.

<sup>1</sup> It is not easy to determine to what risk the Grand Fleet would have been exposed had the Commander-in-Chief gone down "L" channel. He decided as he did because he had received reports which located submarines in the channel at half-past seven and ten minutes to eleven, and because the *Nottingham* had been torpedoed very near it at six o'clock. These messages doubtless referred to the outermost, or possibly the two outermost, boats of U-boat line No. 1. By one o'clock he was well past them, and had nothing to fear except from *U* 53, which had left her station and contrived to dog him for nearly two hours in spite of his alteration of course.

As the fleet crossed "L" channel, the messages which came in from the advanced cruisers must have confirmed the Commander-in-Chief in his opinion that it was not safe to use it. At twenty-five minutes past one the *Minotaur* reported a submarine to the W.N.W.; twelve minutes later she reported that she had fired a shot at it; and a little later the *Achilles* sighted a U-boat. At about 2.0 p.m. Admiral Jellicoe received a message from the Admiralty which told him that, at half-past twelve, Admiral Scheer's flagship had been located in Lat.  $54^{\circ} 32' N.$ , Long.  $1^{\circ} 42' E.$ , forty miles to the S.S.E. of the position he then occupied. Neither he nor the Admiralty had the slightest inkling that the enemy had turned back, and it naturally seemed to Admiral Jellicoe that a fleet action was certain. He ordered complete readiness for action, told the attached cruisers to take up their stations for approaching the enemy (2.5); ordered the guides of columns to bear W.  $\frac{1}{2}$  N., and then told the battle cruisers to proceed down "M" channel. Finally, he directed Commodore Tyrwhitt to make for Lat.  $54^{\circ} N.$ , Long.  $5^{\circ} E.$  (forty miles north of Terschelling), so as to be in a position to attack the enemy as they made back to their bases (2.35). Having thus given what he doubtless thought would be his last orders before deploying, he signalled to all ships with him that the High Seas Fleet might be met at any moment, and that he had every confidence in the result (2.45).

Commodore Tyrwhitt did not at once get Admiral Jellicoe's signal; but the orders given to the 4th Flotilla were intercepted in the *Carysfort*, and reported to him. Realising that Admiral Jellicoe was concentrating every available destroyer under his flag, Commodore Tyrwhitt turned north again (2.12), and held on to a course slightly to the west of north for three-quarters of an hour, reporting what he had done, with his reasons for doing it, to the Commander-in-Chief.

For a short time after Admiral Jellicoe had given his last orders signs of the enemy's presence increased. Zeppelins were sighted by the *Hercules* and the *King George V*, whilst the senior officer of the 3rd Light Cruiser Squadron reported, at twenty minutes past two, that there were four airships in sight from his section of the screen. None the less, seeing how close the enemy seemed to be, it must have appeared strange to the Commander-in-Chief that no reports came in from his advanced forces. At half-past two he got his first clue to the true position, when he received a message from the Admiralty that the High Seas Fleet had been turning to

starboard at half-past twelve. At three o'clock he realised that the chance was gone, though it was not until nearly an hour later that he got definite news from the Admiralty that Admiral Scheer was well on his way back, and had been located in Lat.  $54^{\circ} 14' N.$ , Long.  $2^{\circ} 2' E.$  (78 miles north-eastwards of the Humber), at a quarter to three. Admiral Jellicoe then advanced into the centre of "M" channel, and turned the fleet to the north-westward at four o'clock; having previously cancelled his orders to Commodore Tyrwhitt, and warned him that the Germans might retire by way of Terschelling (3.47).

The signals sent to the Commodore took a long time to get through; and the delay made them puzzling and difficult to understand. None the less the Commodore succeeded in grasping the situation, and in the end brought his force into touch with the enemy. At three o'clock he received Admiral Jellicoe's order to be ready to attack the Germans as they returned to harbour, and he at once turned his squadron to the position ordered. After he had been about an hour on his new course he received the Commander-in-Chief's signal cancelling the last orders given; and so returned (4.0 p.m.) to the northerly course which he had been steering between two and three.

Two more messages were then reported to him: the first was from Admiral Jellicoe, warning him again that the German fleet might be retiring by way of Terschelling; the second was the Admiralty message stating that the German flagship had been in Lat.  $54^{\circ} 14' N.$ , Long.  $2^{\circ} 2' E.$ , at a quarter to three—that is, seventy-five miles to the N.W. of the position the Harwich Force now occupied. It was not possible to reconcile the two messages; so the Commodore decided that he had better assume the Admiralty's observation to be correct, and held on as he was. At about twenty minutes past five, a Zeppelin was seen ahead, and, a few minutes later, the *Lightfoot* reported that she had sighted a considerable number of large vessels steering east. Realising that he was now gaining contact with the High Seas Fleet, the Commodore turned south, to avoid being cut off, and when he had got enough room, turned again and began to dog the enemy.

Admiral Scheer's rapid return home took place as follows. After turning to the S.E. at 12.23, he received several messages which warned him, at last, that whatever smaller forces might be in the direction reported, the Grand Fleet itself was not far off. The first message, from *U 53*, stated that our main fleet had been about seventy-five miles to the

east of Hartlepool, steering south, at a quarter past one, and this was fairly correct. The second, also from *U 53*, reported that our main body consisted of only ten battleships; this was not correct, and must have confirmed Admiral Scheer in his mistaken impression that we had divided our forces, leaving a fairly powerful squadron to the south of him. The third was from Zeppelin *L 11*, which told him that "single (*einzelne*) enemy forces" had been in about the same area at a quarter past two, also steering south. These reports, though not accurate or clear, were enough to warn Admiral Scheer that our main fleet was to the northward of him, and that he ought to get into contact as quickly as possible with the force at which he intended to strike, as time was running short. Unfortunately, no further news was coming in from the Zeppelins in the Flanders Bight; and, at half-past two, he felt that his southerly course had taken him so far towards the German minefield in the Outer Silver Pit, that he could not approach it much further while the possibility of his being forced to a fleet action was still impending from the north. He kept on until a quarter past three, and then turned the fleet to the E.N.E. and began to make for home. At about four o'clock, he learned from the Zeppelins and submarines to the northward of him that our main fleet had turned to the north-westward. An hour and three-quarters later he sighted the Harwich Force. When it was seen that Commodore Tyrwhitt's force intended to follow him, Admiral Scheer took the precaution to make ready for severe night fighting. His experiences on the night of May 31 left him in no doubt that the best way of dealing with destroyer attacks at night was to preserve the order of his main squadrons, and to form a screen in the direction from which the attack was likely to come. He therefore stationed a powerful group of destroyers at the end of his line, and held on as he was, without detaching a force to drive us off.

The Commodore followed them until he received a signal from Admiral Jellicoe, stating that the Grand Fleet was too far off to give him any support. Realising that by attacking he could not delay the German fleet sufficiently to provoke a fleet action, he turned away, and soon afterwards received orders to return to his base. Admiral Scheer returned to harbour unmolested, receiving good news of what was going on further north, during the Grand Fleet's retirement.

When Admiral Jellicoe turned to the north-westward at four o'clock he was certain "that the enemy would either

have laid mines after turning, or have left submarines over which the fleet would pass," and, therefore, thought that it would be "very unadvisable to pass over waters which he had occupied." There was certainly good reason for supposing that he was approaching a danger zone—at twenty minutes past three the *Hercules* reported a submarine; twenty-five minutes later she reported another, and followed it by a further message that yet another had been sighted by the *Dublin*. The fleet were formed in cruising disposition No. 5 when they moved up "M" channel. The light cruiser squadrons, which were covering the rear, were spread on a line running E.N.E. and W.S.W., with a distance of between three and five miles between the groups. Zeppelins *L 11* and *L 31* were following us closely, and at about a quarter to five, the ships of the 3rd Light Cruiser Squadron engaged them.

There seemed, for the moment, to be only one submarine about; but it was obviously in a dangerous position. At the eastern end of the screen the *Dublin* had reported it to the N.W. some time after four o'clock, adding that it was "no immediate menace to any ship." This was true; but it was none the less on the track over which the light cruiser squadrons should pass; and at a quarter to five, as the *Falmouth* was turning back to close the *Chatham* after engaging a Zeppelin, she was torpedoed. Lieutenant-Commander von Bothmer in submarine *U 66* had done the work: he had been stationed on the Flamborough Head line and sighted the battle cruisers on their southerly course before four o'clock. He dogged them very tenaciously for the next hour, and our turn to the north-westward gave him his opportunity.<sup>1</sup>

The *Falmouth* was struck on the starboard side by two torpedoes fired at a range of less than 1,000 yards. The *Chester* was working with her on the screen; and as the distance between the pairs of cruisers had been reduced for passing up "M" channel, the *Chatham* was not far off. The *Birmingham*, which was the next ship to the eastward, had apparently not yet closed up and was out of visual touch.

When Admiral Beatty got news of the disaster, he ordered the destroyers *Pasley*, *Negro* and *Pelican* to assist the *Falmouth*, and told the Rear-Admiral East Coast of England to send tugs at once; he then warned the light cruisers that they were not to be risked, and that the work of rescue was to be left to the destroyers.

As the distance between the battle cruisers and the

<sup>1</sup> Scheer, p. 183.

screen was not very great, the destroyers were on the scene a few minutes after the disaster; but, prompt as they were, the armed trawler *Cooksin* had already gone alongside the *Falmouth* and taken off all the officers and men not required for working the ship.

Lieutenant-Commander von Bothmer held his ground in the most determined fashion. His submarine was repeatedly attacked by the escorting destroyers; a depth charge put out all her lights, and made the water flow in so fast that the crew gave themselves up for lost; yet it was only at about seven o'clock that he sheered off, after firing several more torpedoes which only missed their target by a narrow margin.

The *Chatham* and *Chester* remained near the *Falmouth* for over an hour, and then steamed off, as the Vice-Admiral's orders had been peremptory. When they left, there was good reason to hope that the *Falmouth* would reach harbour, as she could make headway, and was on an even keel. Throughout the night she proceeded under her own steam at 2 knots; and was joined at 11 p.m. by four destroyers of the 4th Flotilla, which had been detached by the Commander-in-Chief. In the early morning one of the tugs from Immingham arrived and took her in tow; and by 9 a.m. the second tug appeared and gave further assistance. Unfortunately, the direct route to the Humber took the *Falmouth* right along the Flamborough Head U-boat line, and at noon *U 63* fell in with her, and fired two more torpedoes, both of which went home. As the *Falmouth* was then being escorted by eight destroyers, it must have required a high degree of skill and courage to bring off the attack. Even so, the *Falmouth* kept afloat all the afternoon, and it was not until eight hours after the last torpedo had struck her that she went down, only five miles from the shelving beach on the southern side of Flamborough Head.

The fleet's movement up "M" channel between 4 p.m. and dark is a fair test of the degree of risk incurred by a large force when it moves over an infested area. Their north-westerly course carried the battle squadrons straight towards the line which the U-boats off Blyth had been ordered to occupy, and everything favoured the enemy submarines. In order to keep inside the channel our screens were closed up; the spaces between the squadrons were considerably less than those prescribed for the formation in which they were then cruising; and as the channel was narrow, the ships could not zigzag freely. The whole target was at once massed and hampered. Without counting the sub-

marine which torpedoed the *Falmouth*, eleven reports of U-boats in dangerous positions came in to the flagship between 4 and 9 p.m. Sometimes the danger to our ships was very great, as, for instance, when a submarine was sighted 400 yards from the *Galatea* (5.20), or when, at ten minutes to eight, two torpedoes passed close astern of the *Inflexible*. By about half-past eight the fleet had got clear; and the squadrons were dispersed to their bases during the next day; but the experience seems to have made a strong impression on the Commander-in-Chief.

The U-boats which harassed our retreat were under the belief that they had done more damage than was really the case. Lieutenant-Commander von Bothmer realised that he had only damaged the *Falmouth*, but, for some unexplained reason, thought that he had sunk a destroyer; while the captain of *U 65*, who fired at the *Inflexible*, was convinced that he had succeeded in hitting her. Admiral Scheer, therefore, took his fleet back into harbour under an exaggerated impression of the losses he had inflicted, and wrote the mistaken account which appears without correction in his book.

To Admiral Jellicoe it appeared as though the enemy had perfected the game which he had so long expected them to play.

He was persuaded that Admiral Scheer's operations had been designed to draw the fleet over submarines, and that unless we could protect our light cruisers with destroyer screens we should suffer heavy losses by striving to bring the enemy to action whenever he left harbour. More than that, he was convinced that the enemy had discovered the position of "L" and "M" channels, and urged that a new channel should be swept without delay.<sup>1</sup>

These were his immediate proposals. The consequences of the day's events upon our North Sea policy were more far reaching. Since the war began, it had seemed that we should always have a fair chance of bringing the enemy to action if he raided our coasts in force, and the opinion had been strengthened by the knowledge that, with the exception of the *sorite* which ended in the Dogger Bank action, the German light forces never put to sea for any considerable operation without the support of the High Seas Fleet. For this reason, we had invariably moved our whole forces whenever they seemed to be stirring.

Admiral Jellicoe now thought that this policy needed drastic revision. He could no longer undertake without an

<sup>1</sup> Admiral Scheer, however, does not mention our swept channels.

adequate destroyer screen to guarantee coastal towns against bombardment, or to interfere with the early stages of a landing, and he strongly urged that the plan of disregarding the submarine and mine menace and "seeking the enemy in any locality, whenever he was known to be at sea" was no longer tenable.

Hitherto, it had been understood that we ought not to seek action inside the area bounded by the latitude of Horn Reefs and the 5th meridian. Admiral Jellicoe now proposed an extension of the zone, and stated that, in his opinion, the fleet ought not to operate in the area to the south of Lat.  $55^{\circ} 30'$  N. and the east of Long.  $4^{\circ}$  E.: experience had shown that waters so far to the eastward could not be properly watched by our cruisers.

With regard to the waters to the west of Long.  $4^{\circ}$  E., he was of the opinion that the fleet might enter them, and take the risk of mines, if a really good opportunity offered of bringing the enemy to action during daylight; but, so long as there was any danger from submarines, the fleet ought not to be taken south of the Dogger Bank, unless every class of vessel were protected by submarine screens.

These proposals meant that the duty of defending the North Sea and the British coasts south of Sunderland was, henceforth, to devolve in general upon the local defence flotillas, the Humber and the Harwich forces, and the 3rd Battle Squadron. Admiral Jellicoe made it quite clear that his proposals were independent of whether the fleet was based at Rosyth or Scapa; and that only if he could be given more destroyers would he be willing to reconsider his decision. The Admiralty endorsed these opinions, and new orders were issued to the Grand Fleet. Drastic and far reaching as they sound, there was in them nothing for which the Admiralty were unprepared.

In March, Sir Henry Oliver, Chief of the Staff, had admitted that, so long as the Grand Fleet was based on Scapa, there was little chance of a fleet action, and the First Sea Lord had expressed the same view, though more emphatically. In April, the Chief of the Staff stated that the enemy practically commanded the North Sea south of the Tyne, and was repeatedly making sweeps on the Dogger Bank which we could not counter; it had for long been realised that the Grand Fleet could not be in time to interfere seriously with the opening stages of a raid in force.

The operations on August 19 were thus the culminating point of a discussion which had been going on for six months and a practical test of the opinions that it had provoked.

These revised orders to the fleet are a register of the striking change introduced into the war at sea by the tactical use of submarines. At this stage, in the absence of effective counter-measures, they had for the time so restricted the movements of a fleet of super-Dreadnoughts—each one of which could steam for several thousands of miles without re-fuelling—that the waters opposite one-third of the eastern coastline of Great Britain, and about half of the North Sea, were outside its zone of effective action. On the other hand, the Germans were as short of submarines as we were of destroyers, so that Admiral Scheer was also denied the use of these waters: his system of fleet scouting and reconnaissance made too heavy a call upon the total of U-boats available for all purposes. By October, when, through the tireless efforts of Admiral von Holtzendorff, a new submarine campaign against commerce had been got well under way, the Ems and the Flanders flotillas were no longer at the service of Admiral Scheer as watching outposts for the fleet during a sortie. A deadlock had thus been reached, and it seemed that for the future the two great battle fleets could but lie inactive, watching one another across a kind of "No-Man's Sea," where attack and defence were concerned only with transport and commerce.

The position, however, was much more interesting than it seemed, for it was always possible that of the two new policies which were causing the stalemate, one at any rate might be abandoned, perhaps temporarily and for some special reason. Admiral Scheer might at a critical moment receive orders, or obtain leave, to attempt a fresh sortie with or without the necessary submarines. It would then be seen whether the British Admiralty would stand by their policy of restraint, or would try once more to bring the High Seas Fleet to action by the old method.

The situation did, in fact, develop on these lines, and the result was exactly what might have been expected. The move came naturally from the Germans, for the strain of the deadlock told more heavily upon them; it was our commerce, and not theirs, which was at sea, and Admiral Scheer, still thinking of the prestige of his battle fleet, was evidently reluctant to forgo the minor successes he had hoped for. Though he could not have the U-boats, he might possibly contrive to do something without them; and accordingly, just two months after his last effort, he made a final attempt to combine the tentative fleet policy in the North Sea with the new submarine campaign.

During the afternoon of October 18, the Admiralty took  
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in the accustomed signs of an impending sortie; but their order to Admiral Jellicoe only instructed him to put the fleet under short notice for steam. There had been no signs of submarine activity during the 15th and 16th; but on the 18th, when the German fleet was making ready, reports came in of submarines off St. Abbs, Girdleness, the Shetlands and the Long Forties. The activity reported was not in any way abnormal; and had there been any reason to suppose that Admiral Scheer was moving southward, the Grand Fleet would doubtless have put to sea. As it was, the Admiralty stood rigidly on their revised orders, and the burden of resisting the impending raid was thrown entirely upon the local defence forces. Commodore Tyrwhitt was ordered to take his force to sea and to assemble to the west of the North Hinder, the Vice-Admiral of the 3rd Battle Squadron was sent into the Swin, and the submarines from the Blyth and Tyne flotillas were moved to a line covering the coastline between Sunderland and Newcastle.

Admiral Scheer left harbour at about midnight, and moved out into the central part of the North Sea, with his flanks covered by a widely spread destroyer screen. His objective was still quite unknown, and, in order to provide against every contingency, Admiral Jellicoe ordered the *Weymouth*, the *Melbourne*, the *Achilles* and the *Minotaur*, and four destroyers from Cromarty, to watch for raiders at the northern end of the North Sea.<sup>1</sup> Just before half-past eight on the morning of the 19th the High Seas Fleet was at last satisfactorily located: it was then about fifty-five miles north-west of Ameland, steering north-west. Admiral Scheer had thus taken his fleet into the zone which was being patrolled by our overseas submarine flotillas, and he was soon aware of it.

Lieutenant-Commander John de Burgh Jessop left Harwich in *E 38* for the patrol to the north of Ameland on October 13, and maintained his station for five days—often in very bad weather—without sighting anything. On October 19, at a quarter to six in the morning, he saw a large number of heavy ships to the eastward, on a westerly course, and steered to the northward to cut them off. In this he was unsuccessful; for at half-past six he had the disappointment of seeing the German battle cruisers steer past him, with the *Moltke* at the rear of the line. Twenty minutes later, however, he sighted more vessels to the eastward, steering straight towards him. As they approached, he made them out to

<sup>1</sup> They were to spread and cruise between the eastern approaches to the Pentland Firth and the approaches to the Hardanger Fiord, Norway.

be light cruisers, accompanied by a destroyer screen. A few minutes later he contrived to penetrate it by a very fine piece of manœuvring, and attacked at a distance of about half a mile. Unfortunately his periscope dipped just as he was about to fire, and he was compelled to loose his torpedoes blindly. They missed, and when he rose to the surface again, he found that the whole German battle fleet was steering past him. It was then about half-past seven, and, in spite of his constant efforts to bring his boat within firing distance of the battle squadrons, he was again disappointed; for at a few minutes before eight he saw the last of the battleships pass him out of range. About half an hour went by before he saw another chance: a three funnelled light cruiser was then approaching him; but, as she was screened by no fewer than four destroyers, the difficulty of bringing off a successful attack was as great as ever. None the less, he contrived, once again, to get between the escort and the target, and at about a quarter to nine, three hours after he had sighted the first echelon of the German fleet, he got in a successful shot. As he sank to the bottom, he heard the detonation of the two torpedoes which he had fired from his bow tubes.<sup>1</sup>

The Admiralty learned, early in the forenoon, that the *München* had been successfully attacked; but the afternoon passed with no further news of the German fleet; and it was not until five o'clock that Admiral Scheer was again located: he was then about ninety miles north-west of Heligoland, steering for the entrance of the Horn Reefs channel, with the obvious intention of returning to harbour. The defence forces along the British coast were at once ordered to "resume normal conditions."

This ended the series of fleet sorties, on which Admiral Scheer had been basing his hopes. He evidently decided that his new system of fleet reconnaissance was unworkable, and that the fleet could not move freely in the North Sea without the watching outposts of submarines which had become so important a part of his system. They were no longer available, and the October sortie was not repeated.

<sup>1</sup> Lieutenant-Commander Jessop attacked another German light cruiser about an hour later; returned finally to his patrol station, and attacked a German submarine on the following day. He was given the D.S.O. for these exploits.

## CHAPTER III

### HOME WATERS

October 1916 to February 1917

WE have already noted<sup>1</sup> that among the risks which the Admiralty had continually in mind was the possibility of an attempt to force the defences of the Dover Straits. After the battle of Jutland, the prospects of any such enterprise were, no doubt, less favourable, for the damaged condition of the High Seas Fleet made it for some months unequal to the necessary covering operations for a serious attack, and the opinions expressed by Admirals Scheer and von Holtzendorff behind the scenes were not long in bringing about the official decision by which its action was for the future restricted to supporting the submarine campaign. On the other hand, the pressure of necessity lay heavy upon the Germans; our anti-submarine dispositions were being systematically extended and were becoming oppressive to the U-boats. These dispositions might be interfered with by a limited offensive, and at the same time apprehension and loss might be caused among our transport and merchant shipping if the German Command were prepared to risk unsupported light forces under cover of darkness. On these somewhat tentative principles a raiding attack was decided upon, and Captain Andreas Michelsen, the Commodore of the High Seas Fleet flotillas, left Germany for Zeebrugge with the 3rd and 9th Flotillas during the night of October 23.<sup>2</sup> The Admiralty realised that some naval movement was afoot, and assumed that it would take place in the Flanders Bight.

<sup>1</sup> See Vol. III., p. 302.

<sup>2</sup> The 3rd Flotilla was composed of the 5th and 6th Half Flotillas, which were made up as follows:

5th Half Flotilla : V 71 (leader), V 73, V 81, G 88, V 67, V 68, V 47.

6th Half Flotilla : S 55 (leader), S 53, S 54, G 42, V 70, G 91; each of these destroyers was armed with three 4-inch guns and six torpedo tubes.

The 9th Flotilla was composed of the 17th and 18th Half Flotillas, which were made up as follows :

17th Half Flotilla : V 79 (leader), V 80, V 60, S 51, S 52, S 36.

18th Half Flotilla : V 30, V 28, V 26, S 34, S 33; each of these destroyers was armed with three 4-1-inch guns or three 28-pounders, and six torpedo tubes.

They therefore telegraphed to Admiral Jellicoe to have the fleet under short notice for steam; and at a quarter to seven, Commodore Tyrwhitt was ordered to assemble his forces to the east of the North Hinder lightship; at the same time the whole East coast was warned to prepare for a "naval raid south." Commodore Tyrwhitt was at the North Hinder by about one o'clock on the 24th; but Michelsen hugged the coast all night, passed the Maas light-vessel at about 2.0 a.m., and our forces never got into contact.

The Admiralty now realised that the Dover area was threatened, and sent two warning telegrams to Vice-Admiral Sir Reginald Bacon, telling him that a force of destroyers—one flotilla—had arrived at Zeebrugge, and that the French had recently reported a concentration of armed barges on the Ostend-Bruges Canal. This new turn of events came as a complete surprise; for the Germans had held the Belgian ports for two years without attempting to use them as anything but submarine bases. As the information seemed to show that the enemy were at last about to make a serious move in the Nieuport sector, the Admiralty ordered Commodore Tyrwhitt at Harwich to reinforce the Dover Command with a light cruiser and four destroyers. This reinforcement (*Carysfort, Laforey, Liberty, Lucifer* and *Laurel*) arrived at Dover on the 25th, and Admiral Bacon had then to decide how he could best distribute his forces between the numerous objectives which lay open to the enemy. Besides the seaward flank of the Allied armies, which seemed immediately threatened, he had to make a provision for defending the route between Beachy Head and the Downs, the mass of shipping which collected every night in the Downs anchorage, the barrage and the drifters watching it, and the transport route behind the barrage, between Folkestone and Boulogne. Of these targets the Downs appeared to him the most important, for it was there that the food supplies of the capital were assembled. The political effect of a serious and sustained raid against this central point of our vast network of communications would hardly have been less than that caused by the Dutch expedition to the Medway in 1667; and it might easily have been accompanied by an acute food shortage, lasting for several days when the ferment was at its hottest. The barrage was less important; but it had been established at a very great expenditure of material and labour, and was at the time looked upon as a powerful and effective obstruction to the German submarines. The net, which began at the South Calliper, on the southern end of the Goodwins, and ran to the south-western end of the Outer

Ruytingen, was guarded by a large number of drifters.<sup>1</sup> These boats worked in groups of from six to eight, and to each group a section of the barrage was allotted; they were unarmed, except for a few rifles, and were not fitted with wireless apparatus.

The Vice-Admiral did not believe that the cross-channel route or the traffic lane to the west of the barrage was seriously threatened, and though he kept a force in hand to protect them if need be, he placed them last in order of importance. His position was none the less a very difficult one. To begin with, the forces at his disposal were inadequate even to the ordinary work of the station, and at this moment the strain was making itself felt. The U-boats had been very active during the previous week, and he had, in consequence, been compelled to double the number of ships engaged in escort and patrol duties; while the light cruiser *Attentive* had her boilers open for cleaning. He could not attempt to direct operations by going to sea himself; his problem was one of defence, and could only be solved by his remaining ashore at the telephone centre and signal station. There he must wait in the black darkness of a raid-night, with lights out and windows open, to hear the sound of gunfire or to receive the reports of it from the many stations strung on the long line between Beachy Head and the North Foreland

<sup>1</sup> Forces under command of Vice-Admiral, Dover, October 26, 1916:

6th Destroyer Flotilla:

Light Cruiser, *Attentive*.

Light Cruiser, *Carysfort* (detached from Harwich).

Flotilla Leader, *Swift*.

32 Destroyers (seven under repair):

8 "L" class, 29 knots, 900-1,000 tons (detached from Harwich).

11 "F" class ("Tribals"), 33 knots, 900-1,000 tons.

13 "B," "C," "E" classes, 30 knots, 400-600 tons.

12 Monitors (three under repair):

Three 15-inch; five 12-inch; four 7·5-inch.

1 Gunboat.

3 Torpedo Boats (one under repair).

8 "P" class boats (two under repair).

5 "Racecourse" Paddle Minesweepers (built in 1916).

5th Submarine Flotilla:

Light Cruiser, *Arrogant*.

10 "C" class Submarines (four under repair).

Seaplane Carrier, *Riviera*.

Auxiliary Patrol:

2 Yachts.

78 Trawlers (56 fitted with minesweep).

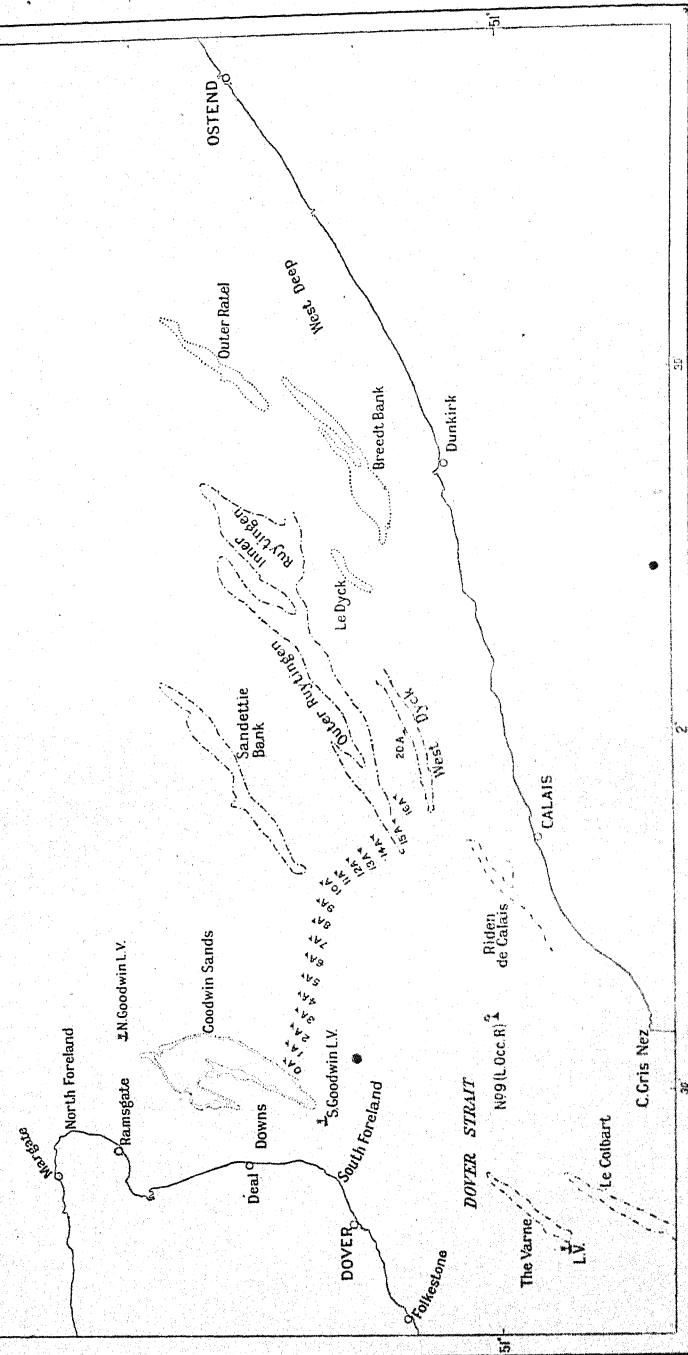
10 Paddle Minesweepers (old).

130 Net Drifters.

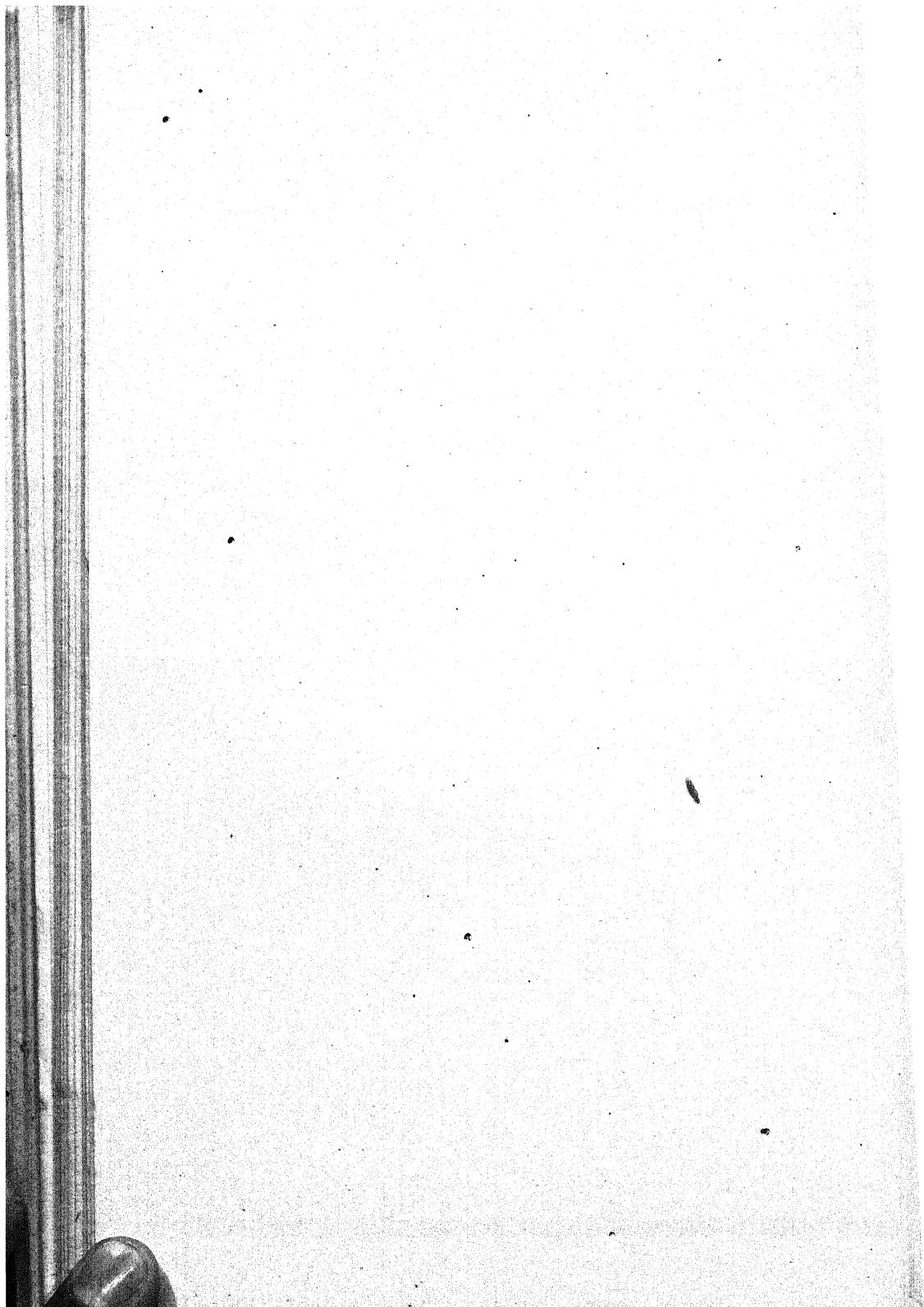
24 Motor Launches.

5 Motor Boats.

ENTRANCE OF THE R. THAMES



[To face p. 54.]



or Dunkirk. His decisions must be doubly embarrassed, both by his knowledge of the many vulnerable points which he had to defend, and his complete ignorance of the force and direction of the enemy's attack.

On the 26th, then, Admiral Bacon, in the belief that the Belgian coast and the Downs were most probably the threatened points, distributed his ships accordingly over the area of his command. The *Laforey*'s division he ordered to Dunkirk to reinforce the *Swift*, *Syren*, *Racchorse*, *Falcon* and *Myrmidon*, which were already there. They were not to leave until the evening and would, in crossing, serve as a night patrol for the barrage. The *Lawford*'s division he sent to the Downs, where they arrived during the afternoon and anchored; the "Tribal" destroyer *Zulu*, and two "P" boats, he ordered to patrol the traffic route, and the 30-knotter, *Flirt*, he sent out to support the drifters on the barrage. He kept six "Tribal" destroyers—the *Viking*, *Mohawk*, *Tartar*, *Nubian*, *Amazon* and *Cossack*—under his hand at Dover to use as a striking force if circumstances required. His remaining 30-knotters, the *Greyhound*, *Mermaid*, *Kangaroo* and *Gipsy*, were formed into a general reserve. These dispositions inevitably left all the probable points of attack, except perhaps the Dunkirk area, where five monitors were stationed in addition to the destroyers, guarded by much weaker forces than Commodore Michelsen's two flotillas; but Admiral Bacon hoped that each detachment was in sufficient strength to delay or hold up the enemy until reinforcements arrived.

The Admiralty received no information of the enemy's intentions or movements after the 24th, and two days later Commodore Michelsen left Zeebrugge at dusk to raid the Straits.

The 9th Flotilla was ordered to raid the transport line between Dover and Calais, and the 3rd to operate against the drifters and the barrage.<sup>1</sup> A distinct area of operations

<sup>1</sup> The target open to the enemy's attack—that is, the transports, supply ships, etc., which were actually at sea in the Channel during the night of October 26/27—were as follows:

15 vessels sailing from Southampton for Havre, Rouen and Boulogne.

|   |   |   |   |  |
|---|---|---|---|--|
| 7 | " | " | " | the Thames for Havre and Calais.                   |
| 5 | " | " | " | Littlehampton for Rouen.                           |
| 1 | " | " | " | Portland for Dunkirk.                              |
| 2 | " | " | " | Dover for Boulogne.                                |
| 7 | " | " | " | Newhaven for Calais, Boulogne, Dieppe, St. Valery. |
| 7 | " | " | " | Calais for Newhaven, Barry, Dover, Deptford.       |
| 1 | " | " | " | Boulogne for Newhaven.                             |
| 7 | " | " | " | Rouen for Southampton, Barry, Newhaven.            |
| 2 | " | " | " | Dieppe for Newhaven and Havre.                     |
| 3 | " | " | " | Havre for Southampton.                             |

was, however, assigned to each half flotilla : the 17th was to attack all transports and destroyers to the north and west of the Varne, the 18th was to search the Pas de Calais. The operation zone of the 3rd Flotilla was divided by a line joining the Colbart and the Sandettie shoals ; the area to the north of the line was allotted to the 5th Half Flotilla, which Commodore Michelsen led in person ; the area to the south of it was allotted to the 6th. The 9th Flotilla left Zeebrugge at 5.30 p.m., and was followed, three-quarters of an hour later, by the 3rd. The vessels of each flotilla remained concentrated until they reached a point about twenty miles E. by N. of the Goodwin Sands, where they divided. The 9th Flotilla arrived at the dispersing point at about twenty minutes past eight, and the two half flotillas at once set course for their zones of operation ; the 3rd Flotilla reached the point just after nine o'clock and also dispersed.

On the British side, Admiral Bacon's orders were being carried out with equal regularity. Lieutenant R. Kellett left Dover in the *Flirt* shortly after eight in the evening and steered towards the south-western end of the Outer Ruytingen at 12 knots ; the *Laforey's* division, which left at about the same time, went on at 20 knots and was soon out of sight.<sup>1</sup> Both the *Laforey's* and the *Flirt's* course converged with the German line of advance, and the Germans soon became aware that there were British forces about. At twenty minutes past nine, as the 18th Half Flotilla was steaming along the northern side of the Outer Ruytingen, the German look-out men reported four British destroyers to port, steaming on an opposite course. They were, of course, the *Laforey's* division crossing to Dunkirk, and if the British look-outs had sighted the German destroyers, at least one division of the raiders would have been located and fought very early in the evening ; but the German destroyers were not reported, and the *Laforey's* division steamed on to the Dunkirk anchorage, unaware that the enemy were so close at hand.

About a quarter of an hour later the 18th Half Flotilla was sighted by the *Flirt*. At 9.35, some time after she had passed the light-buoy three miles distant on her starboard beam, the officer of the watch sighted and challenged a number of destroyers on his port beam. They repeated the signal which he had made, and disappeared in the darkness. The incident did not rouse Lieutenant Kellett's suspicions. He thought it probable that his ship and the others had sighted and challenged simultaneously, that the *Laforey's* division had turned back and that he had passed

<sup>1</sup> See Map 2.

them; he therefore held on as he was and made no report to headquarters. The Germans made a brief alteration of course and then hurried on towards the transport line, still unreported, although they had now twice been in contact with British outpost forces. The two half flotillas of the 3rd Flotilla were now approaching the barrage, which was guarded by four drifter divisions—the 8th, 10th and 16th were to the north and west of the *Flirt*, and the 15th to the eastward. The 5th Half Flotilla, led by Commodore Michelsen, was the first of the German detachments to locate our barrage forces, and the 10th Division was the first group attacked. It consisted of five boats, under the command of the *Paradox*, and was watching the barrage south-west of 7A buoy. Shortly after ten the leading drifters sighted a number of destroyers; the strangers did not answer the challenge, and the drifter captains, more suspicious than Lieutenant Kellett, fired rifles at them. The leading destroyers took no notice and passed on; but those in rear switched on searchlights and opened fire. The drifters *Spoilless Prince*, *Datum* and *Gleaner of the Sea* sank at once; the *Waveney II* was damaged and set on fire; but the *Paradox* escaped and made off to the north-westward.

Hearing gun-fire to the north and west of him, Lieutenant Kellett turned the *Flirt* back at about twenty minutes past ten and steered towards the flashes of the guns. His course carried him straight towards the 6th Half Flotilla, which, as we have seen, was ordered to operate on the eastern side of the barrage against the drifter divisions patrolling the French side of the Straits. In a few minutes he fell in with them. He was still unaware of the real position, and was under the impression that the drifters were attacking a German submarine which was attempting to pass the barrage. Shortly after half-past ten, the *Waveney II* was sighted ahead, and when the searchlight was turned on her she was seen to be lying stopped in a cloud of smoke and steam; almost simultaneously destroyers, which were assumed to be French, were sighted on the *Flirt's* beam. Seeing men in the water, Lieutenant Kellett stopped, and lowered a boat. As the boat got clear of the ship, the Germans opened fire on the *Flirt*, and she sank in a few minutes; only the boat's crew and the officer in charge escaped with their lives.

Meanwhile, news of the raid had come through to Dover and Dunkirk. Commander W. H. Owen, R.N.R., in the yacht *Ombra*, was the first to give the alarm. He was somewhere near No. 11A buoy when the 10th Drifter Division was attacked; and as soon as he sighted gun flashes to the west-

ward of him, he reported by wireless (at 10.30 p.m.) that there were "enemy warships 20 miles east of Dover." His signal was confirmed a few minutes later by a message from Calais which ran: "We observe flashes, apparently gun-fire, to the north of Calais from the sea." Admiral Bacon at once passed on the *Ombera's* signal to Dunkirk and set his available forces in motion. At 10.50 the "Tribal" destroyers, *Viking*, *Mohawk*, *Tartar*, *Nubian*, *Cossack* and *Amazon*, were ordered to slip and proceed; five minutes later the commodore at Dunkirk was ordered to send out the *Laforey's* division.<sup>1</sup> As these second orders were sent out, Commander Owen sent in a further signal that the forces he had previously reported were "apparently three destroyers firing at object north of me." After sending in his first message he had steamed westwards, and at eleven o'clock was trying to get into touch with the 16th Drifter Division to warn them of the danger. Meanwhile, the two half flotillas of the 9th Flotilla, which had crossed the barrage about an hour before and had slipped past our outpost forces, were getting near the transport line between Dover and the French ports. As they approached the Straits (10.30 to 11.0 p.m.), four British vessels were particularly exposed. Patrol boat *P 34* was on duty to the north-westward of the Varne; the hospital ship *Jan Breydel* was crossing to Boulogne, and was still in the Gris Nez area, making for Dover; the empty transport *Queen* was also on her way back from Boulogne, and was between the Varne and the French side; another hospital ship, the *St. Denis*, was steering for Boulogne, and was still on the northern side of the Straits. The transports which were to cross to Boulogne during the night were, apparently, still well down the Channel and out of danger. The 17th and 18th Half Flotillas pressed well on into the Straits, and found nothing; at a quarter to eleven the 17th reached the southern end of the Colbart, and turned back; the 18th steamed on a little further, and turned north-east at a few minutes after eleven. The *Jan Breydel* was the first to sight them: at

<sup>1</sup> The *Carysfort's* fires were banked at two hours' notice. On receiving orders to "prepare to slip," her captain reported that he was "raising steam with all despatch" and would require an hour and a quarter. Later, he reported that he would be ready by twenty minutes past twelve, and was ordered, in reply, to patrol between Folkestone and Gris Nez. This order was subsequently cancelled (12.45 a.m.) by another which ran: "You are to patrol with four destroyers between the South Goodwin and No. 9a buoy. It is possible that French submarines may be out to eastward of the line joining 9a buoy to the N.E. Varne buoy." The *Carysfort* left harbour shortly afterwards; but took no part in the action. She assisted, however, in the search for damaged vessels. See p. 53.

about eleven o'clock, when she was about seven miles north-west of Grisnez, she sighted a group of destroyers which must have been the 17th Half Flotilla. They were to the southward of her, and were crossing her bows. Her captain was unable to signal the news, as he was in charge of a hospital ship, bound by international law to take no part in any warlike operation. Shortly after this, the transport *Queen* and the hospital ship *St. Denis* passed one another, near the Varne, on opposite courses. It was noticed from the *St. Denis* that the *Queen* was burning all her navigation lights, and was being followed by five destroyers. The captain of the *St. Denis* suspected nothing, and steamed on towards Boulogne. When the two ships had passed, the German destroyers steamed rapidly up on each side of the *Queen*, and stopped her. An officer from *V 80* came on board, and allowed the captain and the crew to get into the boats; the *Queen* was then sunk by gunfire. The German 17th Half Flotilla then continued its course for home. This second attack, which took place between eleven o'clock and half-past, was accompanied by a fresh onslaught against the drifters on the barrage.

The 5th Half Flotilla was again responsible for the new attack. Towards eleven o'clock this half flotilla was about three miles east of the South Sand Head, right on the track of any drifter division that might be returning to Dover after the general alarm had been given. Commander Owen was, in fact, doing everything in his power to spread the alarm. After giving his first warning, he succeeded in getting into touch with the 16th Division and ordering them back to Dover. Whilst he was doing so, the 8th Division, which was still further to the westward, was attacked (11.10), and lost two vessels; and a quarter of an hour later, the westerly course of the 16th Division brought it also in contact with the raiding destroyers. After two drifters had been sunk and one other severely damaged, the 16th Division got clear and made towards the Goodwins: "at great risk to himself, the captain of the leading boat sent up rockets to spread the alarm. Commander Owen managed to send in a further signal about this second outburst. Whilst going westwards with the 16th Division, he sighted two German destroyers ahead of him. He turned back to avoid them, and so lost touch with the drifters; but soon afterwards (11.35 p.m.) got a signal through to Dover.

Admiral Bacon's dispositions were, however, interfered with for a time by two mistakes, both due to modern instruments of transmission, which confused the orders given to

the *Lawford* and her division. He had intended that these ships should not leave the Downs area, but that the *Laforey's* division should support the "Tribals" and close the enemy. The order sent to Commander K. Kiddle, the Depot Commander, was that the *Lawford's* division should "weigh and keep a good look-out." Commander Kiddle, quite properly, in sending on this message added the latest information then available, so that the order as actually sent to the *Lawford* at 11.17 ran as follows: "Urgent. Enemy's warships reported twenty miles east of Dover. Weigh and keep a good look-out. 'Tribals' from Dover and *Laforey's* division from Dunkirk are closing that position." The order was either wrongly transmitted or wrongly read: in the message as handed to Lieutenant-Commander A. A. Scott, the commanding officer of the *Lawford*, the word "warships" appeared as "airships." He took this part of the order as the explanation of his duties being limited to lookout work; and when later he intercepted a message from *P 34*, sent after picking up the crew of the *Queen* shortly before midnight, he decided that he was justified in leaving the Downs, now that he knew enemy destroyers to be present. He therefore steered to the eastward and asked for instructions (12.30 a.m.). Admiral Bacon gave the order for him to "return to the Downs forthwith." But here occurred the second mistake: the name *Lawford* on the telephone was misheard as *Laforey*, and the order was dispatched to the latter instead of the former. As things turned out, no harm came of this confusion: the *Laforey's* division had left Dunkirk between 11.0 and 11.15 p.m.; by midnight it had passed the Dyk on its proper errand. The *Lawford's* division had, on the other hand, cleared the South Goodwins and made eastwards towards Dunkirk. If the enemy in their absence had turned into the Downs after crossing the barrage, this second failure in the transmission of an order would have been disastrous.

These mistakes may be set aside as inevitable and instructive. The real misfortune of the night was the failure of our concentration to hold and punish the raiders.

The "Tribal" destroyers had been ordered to "Slip and proceed out of harbour, *Viking* taking charge." The senior officer in the *Viking* evidently did not construe this message as an order to keep his force concentrated, for his detachment left harbour in two sub-divisions. The *Viking*, the *Mohawk* and the *Tartar* left by the western entrance and concentrated outside; the *Nubian*, *Cossack* and *Amazon* left by the other, and having failed in the darkness to find the

*Viking* outside, acted independently for the rest of the night. All the commanding officers, however, steered towards No. 9A buoy, the point at which the enemy was thought to be operating; and as they made eastwards they sighted gunfire and rockets to the north and east of them, where the enemy was at that moment attacking the 16th and 8th Drifter Divisions.

As time went on, the "Tribal" destroyers became still more scattered. The *Cossack* failed to keep up with the other boats, and dropped astern; the commanding officer of the *Viking*, when he came up to 9A buoy, at midnight, sighted firing to the northward and crossed the barrage with the rest of his detachment. Almost simultaneously, Commander M. R. Bernard, in the *Nubian*, sighted firing further to the eastward, and made towards it. This movement separated him from the other boats in his division, which crossed the barrage on a north-north-easterly course at 12.35 a.m. About this time the message was taken in from *P 34*, reporting the attack against the transport line. This caused most of the commanding officers to turn to the southward towards the point where the enemy were now reported; so that, shortly after half-past twelve, the destroyers were approximately in the following positions:

*Viking*, *Mohawk*, *Tartar*. Crossing the barrage near No. 9A buoy on a south-south-easterly course at 15 knots.

*Nubian*. Steering S. 70° W. from No. 8A buoy at 15 knots.

*Amazon*. Steering S. 70° W. from No. 9A buoy.

*Cossack*. Near No. 15A buoy.

*Laforey's* division. About three miles south-eastward of the *Viking's* detachment, steering north-westerly.

*Lawford's* division. About four miles east-south-east of the South Goodwins light vessel, steering east-north-easterly.

Although acting independently, the mass of our destroyer forces had thus assembled in the central part of the Straits; that is to say, they were in the area towards which the enemy was making. The two sections of the 3rd Flotilla were, by now, well on their way home and out of reach; but the 17th and 18th Half Flotillas, which had raided the transport line, were steaming north-eastwards towards the centre of the barrage. The *Nubian* was the first to get into action with them. At about twenty minutes to one Commander Bernard sighted destroyers ahead of him, which he took to be the *Lawford's* division from the Downs. He challenged accordingly and put his helm over to avoid them, but a moment later, the 17th Half Flotilla passed along his port side and poured a heavy and destructive fire into him. Hardly a shot

missed, for the range was very close; and, as he put his helm over again in a spirited attempt to ram the last boat in the enemy's line, a torpedo struck the *Nubian* under the fore bridge, and not only brought her to a standstill, but put her completely out of action. The foremost petrol tanks caught fire and blazed furiously. The flash of the explosion, followed immediately by flames and clouds of smoke from the fire, made a sort of beacon in the central part of the Straits, marking the point of the encounter. The *Lawford's* division, several miles away towards the South Goodwin, sighted it and steamed towards the spot. From time to time the destroyers passed through masses of smoke, still undispersed and lying low down on the water. The *Laforey's* division, much closer, though still to the eastward, also sighted flashes and saw great quantities of smoke illuminated by the gunfire, towards which they immediately set their course. The *Amazon's* turn came next. Some time before the *Nubian* was in action, Commander M. R. Bernard had sighted the trawler *H. E. Stroud*, which was supporting the drifters near 4A buoy, and had slowed down to hail her. The skipper had no news to give, so the *Nubian* was again put on to her course of S. 80° W. at 15 knots. Though the *Amazon's* commanding officer must afterwards have seen the gun flashes of the *Nubian's* action, and heard the firing, he was hampered by being separated from the rest of our destroyers; for he had necessarily to ascertain the character of every vessel he met. He finally fell in with the German destroyers at about a quarter to one, and was, for the moment, so convinced that they were "L" class boats that even when they fired upon him he replied by making the challenge. The Germans passed him at high speed, as they had passed the *Nubian* a few minutes previously. Each successive boat fired a round as she steamed by, and two shells burst in their target. One put the *Amazon's* after gun out of action, and the other put out two boilers in the after boiler-room. The trawler *H. E. Stroud* was still in the neighbourhood, and one of the rounds from the German destroyers hit her also and killed the captain.

The 17th Half Flotilla had now completed its work, but the 18th, which was only a little distance away, had still to be reckoned with. The *Viking*, the *Mohawk* and the *Tartar* were, indeed, rapidly approaching the German destroyers on a southerly course. Commander H. G. L. Oliphant, who was leading the detachment in the *Viking*, first sighted the enemy on his port bow. For the third time the doubt as to whether they were friends or enemies caused delay at the critical moment.

Commander Oliphant challenged; the enemy crossed his bows rapidly and opened fire. The Germans steamed past the starboard side of the British boats, discharging their broadsides as they went by. The *Viking* was not hit; and Commander Oliphant put his helm over to turn and follow the enemy. As he completed the turn, he found the *Mohawk* was in his way, the reason being that one of the German shells had hit her and caused her helm to jam, and Lieutenant-Commander H. S. Braddell had turned out of line to port; the *Tarlar*, following close behind the *Mohawk*, had conformed. When Commander Oliphant got clear of the *Mohawk*, he steered after the enemy to the north-north-east; he did not, however, succeed in picking them up, and in the pursuit he got separated from the other two destroyers. This was the closing episode in the night's work. The *Laforey*'s division was only a short distance away from the scene of the last encounter, and Commander R. A. Hornell, the senior officer, sent the *Lucifer* and *Laurel* to the northward towards the gun flashes; but though they made off at full speed they failed to get contact. And though gun flashes had been seen from the *Lawford* since the first engagement between the *Nubian* and the enemy, the division was too far to the westward to come up in time.

The *Nubian* herself was lying disabled near 5A buoy, when about one o'clock she was sighted and taken in tow. Her forepart had been completely blown away by the torpedo, and she could only be towed stern first. Towards morning the wind got up, and at a quarter to six the towing hawser parted. The *Lark*, who was towing her, could not take her in tow again, and she drifted ashore between the South Foreland and St. Margaret's Bay. Whilst she was drifting helplessly towards the shore, with the seas sweeping over her, Thomas William Smith, master of the tug *William Gray*, steered his ship alongside and took off the wounded. His action was courageous and skilful in a high degree: when he placed himself alongside the *Nubian* the two vessels appear to have been only about half a cable from the shore.<sup>1</sup>

The German flotillas returned to their bases without mishap. The 17th Half Flotilla reached Ostend at a quarter to four; Commodore Michelsen and the remaining three divisions made for Zeebrugge, and reached it rather later. Finally, our destroyers, which had been scattered during the remainder of the night, reassembled near the South Goodwin towards

<sup>1</sup> The *Nubian* was eventually salved: her missing forepart was replaced by the forepart of the *Zulu*, which later lost her stern by striking a mine. The combined vessel when commissioned was named the *Zubian*.

three o'clock, and then swept along the barrage looking for disabled vessels.

When he sent in his report, Admiral Bacon did not fail to explain the disadvantages under which his destroyer captains had been compelled to fight. "The raid was well planned and carried out," he wrote to the Admiralty. "It belongs to that class of operation that succeeds mainly by knowing at what point, and when, the blow will fall, and exactly what it is intended to carry out. . . . The enemy had the advantage of knowing that everyone they met was an enemy; our boats were uncertain, at the moment of meeting, whether a boat was friend or foe; the enemy, therefore, more than once escaped being fired at, when being passed, through our boats waiting to make certain. . . . The raiders had a definite objective and a pre-arranged plan: our boats knew nothing except what they could guess. It is as easy to stop a raid of express engines with all lights out at night, at Clapham Junction, as to stop a raid of 33-knot destroyers on a night as black as Erebus, in waters as wide as the channel. . . . My defence against night raids has been to have the Downs protected, and the transport of troops stopped, since the obvious response to a raid that cannot be prevented is to have nothing the enemy can raid." In a further letter he explained that he had considered the Downs and the Ostend area to be the two points which he had to cover permanently, and added, with regard to the defence of the Straits, "No attempt was made to provide for a defence of the Straits, nor could such defence be attempted with the vessels then at my disposal. . . . To defend a strait against a raid, a considerable number more destroyers than the raiding force would have to be kept continually at sea, and, moreover, of such numbers as to cover, successfully, the area of the approach."

The Admiralty, after examining Admiral Bacon's reports, agreed that his dispositions and strategy were sound. "If we are to make fairly certain of countering the enemy," ran the First Sea Lord's minute, "we should have at least two flotillas patrolling every night in close touch with each other, and, in order to keep such a patrol going, we must have still a third flotilla as a relief. But we do not possess these flotillas, nor could they be berthed at Dover, and we must make the best of what we have until the Grand Fleet destroyer requirements are met, and also regulate our cross-channel traffic so as to expose our troops to as little risk as possible. The work of the Dover force has consisted in protecting the drifters on duty at the mine barrages,

submarine hunting, occasional bombardments of the enemy batteries installed in Belgium, air raids and reconnaissances, protection of shipping in the Downs, watching the Belgian coast to prevent a raid at La Panne, organising and protecting cross-channel traffic, and escorting vessels in the channel. The most important of these are cross-channel traffic and protection of the Downs from the attack of surface vessels. . . . Other considerations may give place to these when it is known or expected that the flotillas at Zeebrugge or Ostend are in a state of readiness and have been reinforced by vessels from the German bight."

There was, however, one point upon which the Admiralty eventually disagreed with the Vice-Admiral. Courts of Enquiry upon the losses incurred and the conduct of the various divisions were held at Dover during the month following the raid. The officers in charge of these enquiries seem to have considered that the "Tribal" destroyers need not have gone into action at such a disadvantage. "The 'Tribal' destroyers," they wrote, "proceeded to sea without any previous formation or orders; some left by the eastern and some by the western entrance; and as soon as they got outside they proceeded to lose touch with one another. . . ." When he forwarded these minutes to the Admiralty, Admiral Bacon said that the "Tribal" destroyers had carried out his wishes, and that he approved of their tactics. "The 'Tribal' destroyers," his letter ran, "generally interpreted my wishes as conveyed in my signal, which was for the 'Tribals' to proceed to No. 9A buoy, where the drifters were being attacked, it being far more important to get boats there early than for them to hold back and wait for others. . . . The commonplace tactics were to form divisions and proceed in company. The sound procedure, under the circumstances, that would have been grasped by a good tactician was for each boat to get into earliest touch with the enemy, and, while keeping touch at sufficient range, to fall back in the direction of their friends which were arriving later. These were the ideal tactics, but ideals are rarely realised." To this the Admiralty replied that they were unable to agree with the tactics recommended. "All experience of night firing during this war," they wrote, "has shown that it is absolutely essential to keep the forces concentrated at night in order to avoid the great danger of our vessels mistaking one another for enemy ships. They consider that in all circumstances destroyers proceeding at night to gain touch with an enemy should be kept in company, and that it is further essential that, if two separate forces are working from

different bases, each should, on dark nights, be confined to certain areas so as to avoid the possibility of meeting one another."

This ruling settled a question of tactics and settled it, no doubt, in the right way; but it did not eliminate, or seek to eliminate, more than one possible source of error in a very complex problem. The orders issued for any operation, and especially those for a dark night's fighting, may be correct in principle and yet fail of their intended effect. To be certain of success it would be necessary to foresee every contingency and to provide beforehand a definite answer to every question that could arise upon the scene of action. The Dover Patrol had not yet had a sufficient experience of night raids: the lessons to be learnt were many, and proficiency could only be gained by degrees. In the meantime the enemy had not succeeded in reaching any of the important objectives which lay within his choice, and showed no sign of attempting to profit by his experiment.

Less than a fortnight after the raid was over, the Admiralty heard that the 3rd German Flotilla had been recalled to Germany from Zeebrugge. This withdrawal might, however, be purely temporary, and they could not allow it to affect their plans for strengthening and reinforcing the Dover Command. But the needs of the Dover Patrol could not be considered independently of other new calls upon our destroyer forces. The growing activity of the German submarines in the Channel, and the rising toll of loss suffered by neutral merchantmen in the western approaches between Ushant and Land's End, had by this time created a pressing need for destroyer reinforcements at Portsmouth and Devonport. The matter was, indeed, so urgent, and submarine warfare was taking so serious a turn, that Admiral Jellicoe had admitted that "it might conceivably be wise policy to divert destroyers from the Grand Fleet and other available sources, such as the Humber, Harwich, etc., for a thoroughly organised attack on submarines, when it is known that they are operating in considerable numbers, in comparatively narrow waters such as the Channel." The Commander-in-Chief expressed this view in writing on October 29, and repeated it when he came south to Whitehall, early in November, to discuss the naval position with the Government. The Admiralty were, for the moment, unable to assemble a force of sufficient strength to meet the Commander-in-Chief's suggestion: their redistribution of the destroyers could only be a sort of middle way between conflicting claims. They decided that the Dover Patrol should be reinforced by three divisions

from Harwich, which were to be kept concentrated and used as a fighting force. This, it was hoped, would materially help Admiral Bacon, by giving him the use of a group of destroyers trained in the flotilla tactics which, in the Admiralty's view, were essential to a successful defence of the Straits. Five of the best destroyers from the 4th Flotilla at the Humber were to be added to this striking force. The remaining destroyers of the Humber flotilla were to be moved to Portsmouth, where they were to be used for offensive operations against German submarines operating in the Channel. But as by withdrawing the 4th Flotilla from the east coast the Admiralty would be leaving the 10th Sloop Flotilla unprotected, and thereby incurring the risk of another *Arabis* incident, the Commander-in-Chief was ordered to send a division of destroyers from the Grand Fleet to support the sloops. If, owing to this weakening of his destroyer forces, the Commander-in-Chief was unable to screen all his battleships, a part of the 4th Battle Squadron was to be left behind when the fleet put to sea.

Although the intentions of the naval leaders at Berlin were not known at the time, there can be no doubt, in the light of later information, that the Admiralty's decision to draw upon the Grand Fleet destroyers was sound. The German plan of concentrating all their naval resources upon the submarine campaign was strengthening with every week that went by; and a rather trivial incident had recently raised a discussion at Pless, and caused the whole naval policy of the Berlin authorities to be reviewed afresh.

On November 3 Admiral Scheer was informed that two German submarines, *U 30* and *U 20*, had stranded in a fog off Bovbjerg, and at once sent out four "Kaiser" class battleships, the battle cruiser *Moltke*, and a half flotilla, to assist them. When they reached the spot, the destroyers repeatedly tried to tow *U 20* off, but failed; *U 30*, not being so badly ashore, was floated off. Whilst the destroyers worked close in shore, the *Moltke* and the battleships patrolled to the west and north. This brought them well into the zone which was being watched by our submarines of the 11th Flotilla; and they were, in fact, being closely followed. At about noon, Commander N. F. Laurence, in submarine *J 1*, sighted the four enemy battleships to the eastward of him, on a northerly course. A very heavy sea was running, and Commander Laurence was finding it very difficult to keep his boat at an even depth. It was not until an hour later that he was able to get into an attacking position: at one o'clock, just as the squadron was turning to a southerly

course, he fired four torpedoes from his bow tubes, at a range of 4,000 yards. One of them hit the *Grosser Kurfürst*, another the *Kronprinz*; and the result was that both ships were in dockyard hands for a considerable period. The report of this incident was very badly received at Pless; and Admiral Scheer received a sharp rebuke from the Emperor himself: "To risk a squadron, and by so doing nearly to lose two armoured ships in order to save two U-boats, is disproportionate (*stünde nicht im richtigen Verhältniss*), and must not be attempted again." It was not to be expected that Admiral Scheer would meekly accept an order which recalled the restrictions placed upon Admiral von Ingenohl in the early days of the war. He succeeded, after a personal interview, in getting the imputation against his leadership withdrawn; but the general plan of naval policy which he laid before the Emperor shows that he now (as in his secret report after Jutland) regarded the High Seas Fleet as unequal to the task of defeating England, and useful only as a sort of auxiliary to the submarines. He had even definitely abandoned his earlier programme of fleet raids and bombardments in the North Sea. "The whole organisation of fleet preparedness," he writes, "is directed to giving every undertaking the highest possible degree of security; and to leave all ships returning to harbour for their necessary rest period, undisturbed. The maintenance of this decision is important in that, during the further progress of submarine war (upon which, in my view, our whole naval policy will sooner or later be compelled to concentrate), the fleet will have to devote itself to the single task of bringing the submarines safely in and out of harbour."<sup>1</sup>

In Admiral Scheer's new strategy the destroyers at Zeebrugge were to play an important part. "They were," he says, "to attack the watching forces on the channel barrage, and so assist the submarines to get through." For the moment, however, this part of his plan was not very vigorously pressed; the 3rd Flotilla was not replaced, and the next undertaking in the Dover area lacked the decision and energy of Commodore Michelsen's earlier stroke.

Being now convinced that the Germans had at last turned their attention to a zone which offered so many targets to an attack by light craft, the Admiralty had done something to relieve Admiral Bacon's difficulties. After the raid in October, the First Sea Lord, as we have seen, had written that if the Straits were to be made secure, at least two flotillas would have to be kept on patrol, and a third one

<sup>1</sup> Scheer, pp. 191-93.

kept in reserve; and, during the month following, some of these reinforcements had been collected from the other commands. On October 28, the *Lightfoot* and four destroyers were sent from Harwich to join the *Carysfort* and the eight boats which were already there; on the following day, the *Lapwing* and *Phœnix* arrived from the 1st Flotilla to replace the *Nubian* and the *Flirt*. On November 21 three of the best destroyers from the 4th Flotilla in the Humber arrived.<sup>1</sup> Admiral Bacon was, moreover, promised two flotilla leaders from the Grand Fleet, as soon as they could be released by the delivery of the *Seymour* and the *Saumarez*, which were then completing. None of these new vessels was, however, brought into action by the very cautious attempt which the German flotilla at Zeebrugge made a few days after the first reinforcement came down from the Humber.

The German flotilla commander, Commander Goehle, was ordered to attack the northern entrance to the Downs, and to destroy all such warships and auxiliaries as he might fall in with: Ramsgate was to be bombarded if possible. The enterprise was to be carried out by the 9th Flotilla, reinforced by three destroyers styled the "Z" or Flanders Half Flotilla. The force that left Zeebrugge on the night of the 23rd was thus made up of thirteen destroyers.<sup>2</sup> They reached the North Hinder Light at twenty minutes past seven, and then steered westwards towards the Kentish Knock at fourteen knots. When six miles off the Light they turned towards the northern entrance to the Downs and slowed down. Just before nine o'clock they were three miles north-eastward of the North Foreland and could see the lights of Ramsgate. Commander Goehle now steamed towards the anchorage at a very slow speed, and he was soon sighted. The armed drifter *Acceptable* of the 2nd Division of Ramsgate drifters, which comprised twelve boats in all, was then patrolling at the north end of the anchorage near the Broadstairs Knoll, and her commanding officer, Lieutenant W. T. Fitzgerald, R.N.R., suddenly sighted six destroyers steering on a south-south-westerly course across his stern towards the anchorage. He did not suspect that they were enemy boats, and ported his helm to get clear of them, but, as they passed under his stern, at a distance of less than a cable, he saw that they were strangers. They were painted in a lighter colour than British boats, and all had high, topgallant forecastles. When the last boat in the line had the drifters well abeam, she opened

<sup>1</sup> The other two promised, see ante, p. 67, arrived on December 2.

<sup>2</sup> 9th Flotilla : *V 79, V 80, S 36, S 51, S 62, V 30, V 28, V 26, S 34, S 33.*

"Z" Half Flotilla : *V 67, V 47, V 68.*

fire, and sent down nine or ten shells at the *Acceptable*, and at the drifter *Buckler*, which was near by. The drifters at once gave the alarm, and the three destroyers stationed in the Downs for the night, the *Crusader*, *Saracen* and *Mermaid*, slipped their cables and got under way; but by the time they had reached the northern end of the Downs, the enemy destroyers had disappeared, after firing a few rounds into Margate. The German reconnaissance was so feebly conducted that the destroyers did not even wait to ascertain the forces which they would have to face if they ever attempted to press home a serious attack upon the anchorage. The incident showed, however, that the German commander at Zeebrugge was at all events determined to keep the Dover area under observation; and Admiral Bacon, when he forwarded his report on the night's occurrences, attached his revised plan for defending the Straits.

During the day he intended to maintain a patrolling division of five Harwich boats to cruise between the South Goodwins and Calais, and to keep a 12-inch monitor at anchor in the Downs to protect the traffic against a raid in thick weather. One destroyer was to be stationed in the Dungeness, and another in the Beachy Head area, as an outer guard to the six destroyers which worked on the traffic route to Boulogne. This would leave a reserve of two light cruisers, two flotilla leaders, and a division of Harwich boats at Dover, standing by with steam at short notice.<sup>1</sup> By night, when the chances of a raid were greater than by day, the Downs Force was to be increased by a light cruiser, a flotilla leader and the division of Harwich destroyers allocated to the Goodwins-Calais patrol, who would be relieved by the other Harwich Division which had been held in reserve during the day. The night reserve at Dover kept in readiness for operations in the Straits would then consist of one light cruiser, one flotilla leader and the division of "Tribal" destroyers which during the day had been engaged on patrol and escort duty.

The signs of renewed activity in the Dover area did not shake the Admiralty's conviction that the German submarine campaign would shortly take first place in the war at sea, and that very special measures would be required to meet the danger. The feeling was shared by the country as a whole; the Press was restless and disturbed, and both the Government and the High Naval Command were

<sup>1</sup> The Harwich vessels were constantly being changed; but the contingent detached to Dover was henceforward one light cruiser, one or two leaders, and twelve destroyers.

criticised. Everything suggested that a change of Ministers and of the Board of Admiralty could not be long delayed. Nobody doubted that the submarine campaign, which overshadowed everything, would have to be answered by a drastic revision of our existing methods of war. In the words of Mr. Balfour, all measures taken up to date had proved mere palliatives; and it was only natural that new men should be called upon to devise and carry through a new policy. Admiral Jellicoe, who during the past few weeks had been making the most urgent representations about the coming danger, seemed to be the man upon whom the responsibility should be placed. On November 22, just as he was about to take the fleet to sea for exercises, he received a telegram offering him the post of First Sea Lord, and asking him to take up his duties without delay; simultaneously, Admiral Beatty was offered the command of the Grand Fleet. Both offers were accepted, and a week later Admiral Jellicoe was at Whitehall. Admiral Sir Cecil Burney accompanied the Commander-in-Chief to the Admiralty as Second Sea Lord, and Admiral Sir Charles Madden succeeded him in charge of the 1st Battle Squadron. Rear-Admiral A. L. Duff, the second in command of the same squadron, was called to Whitehall to take charge of the new anti-submarine division, and was relieved by Rear-Admiral W. C. M. Nicholson. Both flag commands in the 2nd Battle Squadron were also changed. Vice-Admiral Sir Thomas Jerram was relieved by Vice-Admiral Sir John de Robeck; and Rear-Admiral W. E. Goodenough, who throughout the war had gained much distinction as a cruiser commander, relieved Rear-Admiral A. C. Leveson. There was no change in the flag officers of the 4th and 5th Battle Squadrons. Admiral Beatty strongly urged that Admiral Sir William Pakenham, the rear-admiral in charge of the 2nd Battle Cruiser Squadron, should succeed him in command of the Battle Cruiser Force. Questions of seniority made the appointment difficult; but as no other available officer of flag rank had anything like Admiral Pakenham's experience of the work, Admiral Beatty's views prevailed. Admiral Pakenham had had over four years' continuous service with the battle cruisers when he was appointed to take charge of the force. The command of the 1st Battle Cruiser Squadron became vacant by the removal of Rear-Admiral O. de B. Brock to the post of Chief of Staff to Sir David Beatty, and Rear-Admiral R. F. Phillimore was ordered to assume it. In the 2nd Battle Cruiser Squadron Rear-Admiral Leveson relieved Sir William Pakenham. The vacancies created in the 2nd Cruiser Squadron and the 2nd

Light Cruiser Squadron by Vice-Admiral H. L. Heath's transfer to the 3rd Battle Squadron and Rear-Admiral Good-enough's removal to the battle fleet were filled by Rear-Admiral S. R. Fremantle and Commodore C. F. Lambert, the Fourth Sea Lord under the outgoing Board of Admiralty. These changes had hardly been carried through when Mr. Asquith's Coalition Government fell.

The advent of Mr. Lloyd George's new Government was followed by important political readjustments which affected the administration of the war at sea. On assuming office, he at once altered the existing machinery by creating a small War Cabinet of four or five members, freed of all departmental duties; and also by creating new ministries for the rapid despatch of the vast mass of additional business which resulted from the complete mobilisation of the nation's resources.<sup>1</sup> The first War Cabinet was composed of the Premier, Lord Curzon, Lord Milner, Mr. Bonar Law, and Mr. Arthur Henderson; it was subsequently increased by the addition of Sir Edward Carson, the First Lord of the Admiralty under the new administration. Further, this new War Cabinet was no longer an inner committee taking decisions which must be referred if they involved questions of policy: its rulings, taken after consultation with the naval and military authorities, were absolute and final.

In its general deliberations the new Board of Admiralty<sup>2</sup> was destined to be occupied most closely with the submarine campaign, but its immediate attention was called to the Flanders Bight and the Dover area. On December 22 Admiral Bacon wired to the Admiralty to say that a German destroyer had gone from Zeebrugge to Ostend to reinforce the flotilla. He had previously reported that there were rumours of a German attack upon the wireless stations in his command combined with a raid upon the Downs or the Thames. The Admiralty at once decided that further reinforcements ought to be sent to Dunkirk whilst the long nights increased the chances of a successful raid; and Commodore Tyrwhitt was ordered to send the *Nimrod* and eight destroyers of the 10th Flotilla from Harwich to Dunkirk "for service during the dark nights in the event of a raid."

<sup>1</sup> See Vol. III., pp. 42 n, 200.

<sup>2</sup> The Board of Admiralty when the new Government took office was composed as follows: Sir Edward Carson, First Lord; Admiral Sir John Jellicoe, First Sea Lord; Admiral Sir Cecil Burney, Second Sea Lord; Rear-Admiral F. C. Tudor Tudor, Third Sea Lord; Commodore Lionel Halsey, Fourth Sea Lord; Commodore G. M. Paine, Fifth Sea Lord (Director of Air Services); E. G. Pretymen, Civil Lord; Sir Francis Hopwood, Additional Civil Lord.

The Commodore had been reinforced from the Grand Fleet shortly before this order reached him. In order to replace some of the forces which it was intended to send from Harwich to Dunkirk, during the dark nights the *Grenville* and eight destroyers<sup>1</sup> had been sent south from Scapa and had arrived at Harwich on the 19th. They were in time to assist in a large minesweeping operation on the Swarte Bank, and when it was over, the Commodore was told by the Admiralty to keep them under his command for the time being. This redistribution of forces left the Commodore with the 5th Light Cruiser Squadron, two leaders, one destroyer of the 1st Flotilla, two of the 9th, two of the 10th, and six from the Grand Fleet.<sup>2</sup> The result was that Admiral Bacon, after the readjustments which had been made at the close of the year, could generally count on having, in addition to his own force, a light cruiser, two flotilla leaders and from fifteen to twenty destroyers at his disposal.

The first three weeks of the new year passed without incident in the southern area; but during the forenoon of January 22, the Admiralty became aware that a German destroyer flotilla would be leaving the rivers for Zeebrugge during the afternoon. The chance thus offered us was an excellent one. There could be very little doubt that this reinforcement, like the last, was intended for operations against the Straits; so that, if it could be brought to action and dispersed before it reached its base, the whole German plan would be thrown into disorder from the very beginning. The duty of intercepting these new reinforcements fell entirely upon the Harwich Force.<sup>3</sup> With five hours' steaming Commodore Tyrwhitt could get his cruisers and destroyers between the Schouwen Bank and the Maas, which the Germans would probably not pass until about midnight. Everything thus depended upon getting the Harwich Force away early and in sufficient strength.

At 11.40 a.m. Commodore Tyrwhitt was, therefore, ordered to "intercept the enemy with destroyers" and to take his light cruisers to sea "in support, to assist after daybreak." At the same time, the Admiral at Dover was told to send six destroyers to Harwich without delay.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Morning Star*, *Moon*, *Musketeer*, *Mandate*, *Opal*, *Nonsuch*, *Napier*, *Strongbow*.

<sup>2</sup> The force naturally varied from day to day, as there were always a certain number of destroyers temporarily out of service on account of defects.

<sup>3</sup> See Map 3.

<sup>4</sup> He detached the *Nimrod*, *Moorsom*, *Phœbe*, *Morris*, *Matchless*, *Manly*, *Mansfield*, which had been sent on 19th from Harwich to Dunkirk.

When the warning telegram reached the Commodore he had six light cruisers, one leader, and ten destroyers ready; but reinforcements from the Dover command came in during the afternoon, and at half-past five he put to sea with six light cruisers, two flotilla leaders and sixteen destroyers.<sup>1</sup> Shortly before he sailed, news came through that the German flotilla was on its way, and was due to pass Borkum between 4.45 and 5.15. It was thus evident that we were in good time, and everything seemed to promise well for the success of our operations. The flotilla which we were endeavouring to intercept was the 6th, in charge of Commander Max Schultz; it was composed of the flotilla leader—*V 69*, and ten boats of the “*V*,” “*S*,” and “*G*” classes. We had thus a crushing superiority of ships and guns.

As the enemy had the choice of passing down the coast by the Maas and Schouwen Bank light-vessels, or else of making for Zeebrugge down the central part of the Flanders Bight, past the North Hinder, Commodore Tyrwhitt's dispositions had to cover two alternative routes. Conforming as closely as he could to the Admiralty's intentions, he ordered his destroyers to take up patrolling stations in two detachments; the first off the Maas, the second off the Schouwen Bank. The light cruisers, also divided into two detachments, were stationed further to the westward between the North Hinder and the Maas. The actual allocation of forces was as follows.

1. The Maas detachment, under the commanding officer of the *Grenville*, was divided into three patrol lines: the *Rigorous* and *Rob Roy* in the western; the *Grenville*, *Radstock* and *Sorceress* in the centre; the *Meteor* and *Melpomene* in the eastern. Each group was to patrol on lines spaced two miles apart, and running north-north-east and south-south-west (true).

2. The Schouwen Bank detachment under the commanding officer of the *Nimrod*, was divided into two lines. The first, consisting of the *Nimrod*, *Moorsom*, *Phœbe*, *Mansfield*, *Manly*, *Matchless* and *Morris*, was to patrol between the light-vessel and the South Banjaard Bank light buoy; the second, consisting of the *Simoom*, *Starfish*, *Surprise* and *Milne*, was to patrol between the lightship and the Schar.

3. The light cruiser detachment was in two divisions. The first, consisting of the *Centaur* (broad pendant), *Aurora* and

<sup>1</sup> The *Grenville* and the eight destroyers sent from the Grand Fleet in December went back to Scapa on January 3. The *Grenville* returned to Harwich on the 18th, bringing with her the *Sable*, *Radstock*, *Portia*, *Rigorous*, *Sorceress* and *Rob Roy*.

*Conquest*, was to proceed to a patrol line about twenty-five miles eastward of the North Hinder. The second, consisting of the *Penelope*, *Cleopatra* and *Undaunted*, was ordered to a patrol line about ten miles to the westward of the first. The two lines ran roughly north-east and south-west (true), and were parallel to one another.

The Harwich Force left harbour in three groups. The *Grenville* and her destroyers sailed at four o'clock; the light cruisers with the *Simoom*, *Starfish*, *Surprise* and *Milne* an hour later; and the *Nimrod* with the six destroyers from Dunkirk at about six. It was quite dark when these detachments passed Orfordness Light and cleared the Sledway. The weather was fine and clear, with a slight wind from the eastward. A sharp frost set in after dark, and it became bitterly cold: at midnight the thermometers were several degrees below freezing point, and as the night wore on the decks were coated with ice. All our ships had arrived on their patrol lines well before midnight, and for the next three hours they saw nothing.

The commander of the German flotilla had selected a route which passed about midway between the North Hinder and the Maas; and at a quarter to three he ran into the *Centaur's* division. Our ships were, at the time, in line ahead, with the *Centaur* leading, and were steering to the south-west. The German destroyers were first sighted by the *Conquest*, at the end of the line, crossing astern of the cruisers from port to starboard. All our ships opened fire when the German boats were to starboard; but neither side switched on searchlights, as the ships were visible from the flare of their funnels. The German fire was spirited, but rather wild, and the Commodore, after swerving to avoid a torpedo, turned to starboard and tried to head the Germans to the north-eastward. In this he was not successful, for the flotilla managed to get away under a heavy smoke screen and resume its course for Zeebrugge. But the encounter shook the German formation. *V 69*, the leader, was struck by a shell, and her helm jammed; as she turned in a circle *G 41* rammed her, and was so damaged herself that her speed dropped to eight knots. *S 50*, the destroyer astern of *V 69*, lost touch with the rest of the flotilla when the leader fell out of line, and followed on by herself at twenty-three knots. At three o'clock the German flotilla had shaken us off, and the Commodore turned south to close the Schouwen Bank, not knowing that two German destroyers, badly damaged, were steaming away from the scene of the struggle at slow speed, and that another, undamaged, but isolated from the

rest, was making towards the Schouwen Bank on a course roughly parallel to his own.

The other ships on patrol were all aware that the Commodore was engaged; for the flashes of the guns were seen almost simultaneously from the *Penelope* and the patrols at the Maas and the Schouwen. Between three and a quarter-past the patrols received a signal from the Commodore that the enemy was in Lat.  $52^{\circ} 00' N.$ , Long.  $3^{\circ} 15' E.$ , steering north-east. This was followed by another, saying that the enemy had scattered; but as neither was accompanied by any order to close the scene of action, or to remain on the patrolling station, the senior officers of the destroyer detachments did not know whether they ought to act independently or remain on their stations and wait for further orders. Commander H. V. Dundas, in the *Grenville*, was quite certain that on the news received he had no right to leave his patrol line. The captains of the *Meteor* and the *Rigorous* thought differently, and made off to the northward to cut the enemy off from the Bight. They did not take in Commander Dundas's signal to close him, so that only the leader and the two boats in his immediate company were left on the Maas patrol. To the south, the captain of the *Nimrod* took the same view of the position, and made off to the north-eastward at 30 knots with his detachment of six destroyers. To the west of the Schouwen Bank, however, the destroyers kept their station. The captain of the *Penelope* moved his detachment eastwards towards the sound of the guns. The result of these movements was that, on the first report of contact with the enemy, practically all our forces lost their cohesion, and the original dispositions were broken up. In his report on the whole affair, Commodore Tyrwhitt explicitly justified Commander Dundas; but it should be remembered that the majority of the other captains decided spontaneously and without orders that it was best to act independently after contact was reported; and that Commodore Tyrwhitt's orders gave absolutely no guidance upon the very point which proved to be the main problem of the night's work. There was, indeed, a great deal to be said for those commanding officers who reasoned that the Commodore had located the forces which they had been sent out to catch, and that, in consequence, their duty was to pick up the scattered destroyers of the German flotilla. This line of reasoning was particularly justifiable in the case of the *Penelope's* captain, as the light cruisers were defined in the original orders from the Admiralty as a supporting force.

As soon as the Commodore realised that the patrols were leaving their assigned positions, he ordered the destroyers back; but it was not until after half-past three that his signal was taken in by everybody concerned. Our dispersed forces then turned back for their stations. The Commodore's order was not, however, received in the *Grenville*, and Commander Dundas, who knew that the *Nimrod* had left her station and was steaming towards him, took his detachment to the north of the Maas to avoid confusion when the *Nimrod* passed through his patrol area.

The next report of the enemy came from the other division of light cruisers. When Captain H. Lynes, in the *Penelope*, was certain that the *Centaur* was engaged to the eastward, he closed the Commodore's patrol line until about half-past three, and then turned to the south-westward. Ten minutes after he had done so, a "single German torpedo craft" was sighted on the starboard bow, steaming slowly on an opposite course. It was the leader of the flotilla—*V 69*—steaming away, damaged, from the first engagement. The three British cruisers switched on searchlights and smothered her with shell at very close range. Everybody on the *Penelope*'s bridge was convinced that the German boat was sunk, and some on board the *Cleopatra* thought they heard the cries of men in the water. The searchlights were, however, switched off too quickly for the facts to be ascertained; and the German flotilla leader, still afloat, though now more damaged than ever, with a funnel shot down and a huge shell-hole aft, escaped towards Ymuiden, where she arrived several hours later. The German straggler, *G 41*, reached the Dutch coast, and steamed along it towards Zeebrugge, as fast as her damaged bows allowed.

At the time of this second engagement, the *Centaur*'s division was about eight miles to the southward, closing the Schouwen Bank. The *Meteor* and the *Melpomene*, the *Rigorous* and the *Rob Roy* were still steaming at full speed towards the Bight, and Commander Dundas was moving north-eastwards to keep clear of the *Nimrod*'s division, which he imagined to be very near him.<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile, the bulk of the 6th Flotilla passed through our concentration without mishap. After their engagement, they steered a course that took them between the *Nimrod*'s and the *Centaur*'s patrol zones, and passed the Schouwen

<sup>1</sup> His precaution was needless, because Commander R. G. Rowley-Conwy had turned back towards the Schouwen Bank, on receiving the Commodore's orders to return to his patrol. The *Simoom*, *Starfish*, *Surprise* and *Milne* were still to the north-west of the Schouwen Bank light-vessel.

Bank light-vessel at about seven minutes to four, unobserved by the *Simoom*, *Starfish*, *Surprise* and *Milne*, which were patrolling near it. Having passed the light-vessel, the 6th Flotilla had cleared all our intercepting forces, for Commodore Tyrwhitt had stationed no detachment to the south of Schouwen Bank. The third straggler, *S 50*, was, however, following her flotilla, and she soon ran into our patrols. Shortly after four, as the *Nimrod*'s detachment was approaching the Schouwen Bank on a south-westerly course, the lookout men reported an enemy destroyer on the starboard bow. The commander of the *Nimrod* steered to close her; but before he could get within range, the *Simoom*'s detachment had engaged her. The German destroyer had the good fortune to be nearly at the head of our line of destroyers, and so could concentrate on the *Simoom*. After a few minutes of intermittent firing, in which the *Simoom* suffered a certain amount of damage, the German got a torpedo home on her, and her magazine blew up with a tremendous detonation. Meanwhile, however, the *Nimrod* and her destroyers were working round the German destroyer's bows, and the German commander turned sharply to the eastward in order to get clear. He was now convinced that his passage to the southward was completely barred, and, as soon as he had shaken off the *Nimrod*, he steered towards the Dutch coast; having reached it, he made his way back into the bight.

The torpedoing of the *Simoom* ended the night's fighting; when the action ended, the *Nimrod*'s destroyers had overrun the three boats of the *Simoom*'s division, and the two detachments became very much involved. Lieutenant-Commander Graham, of the *Morris*, took off all the survivors.

At a quarter-past four Commodore Tyrwhitt heard from the *Nimrod* that enemy destroyers were near the Schouwen Bank light-vessel; and he at once signalled back that he was closing the light-vessel with his three cruisers. A few minutes later he heard that the *Simoom* was torpedoed, and repeated his previous order to all ships to remain on their patrols. At half-past four the *Nimrod* reported that the enemy's destroyers had disappeared. Shortly afterwards, he heard that the *Simoom* was still afloat, and being uncertain whether she had been torpedoed by a destroyer or a submarine, turned northwards to get out of the danger area (4.35 a.m.). An hour later, he ordered the *Penelope* to close the Maas and sweep towards the Schouwen Bank at daylight with the *Grenville*'s destroyers in company. The German Flotilla, which had passed the Deurloo buoy at 4.15, was by now well inside the swept channel to Zeebrugge and out of danger.

When daylight came on at a quarter-past seven, the Commodore closed the Schouwen himself and wound up the operation as quickly as he could. The *Nimrod*, which was still standing by the *Simoos*, was ordered to sink her; after which her destroyers were directed to screen the light cruisers. The *Penelope* was ordered back to the base shortly after eight o'clock. A few seaplanes, which were hovering near the Schouwen Bank, were engaged; but they soon flew off and the force returned to Harwich.

The results of the night's work were extremely disappointing. In spite of our knowledge of the enemy's movements, and our great superiority in strength, the bulk of the enemy flotilla got past our intercepting forces, and inflicted in passing more injury than they received. The leader, *V 69*, was, it is true, very badly damaged when she reached Ymuiden, but we were quite unable to show that she put in to escape the pursuit of our ships, and the Dutch Government, in consequence, refused to intern her.

The failure of our dispositions to achieve success was, no doubt, due to the hazards of a night action, and the lesson to be drawn for future use was clear. In operations of this kind it is always possible that individual commanders may, at some moment, be out of touch with each other or with their Commodore, or both, and so find themselves under the necessity of acting on their own initiative. A great deal will then depend upon the uniformity of their principles, whether derived from their previous training or from the nature of their orders for the occasion. Ideally all contingencies should be foreseen and provided for in orders; when this is difficult, or perhaps impossible of attainment, general training will be the only guarantee of unanimity. Here, when the critical moment arrived, each destroyer captain had necessarily to decide for himself; and as the senior officers had been trained partly in the Grand Fleet destroyers and partly in the Harwich Force, their professional judgments differed.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE OUTER THEATRES (EAST AND WEST AFRICA, MESOPOTAMIA, BALTIC) AND THE MEDITERRANEAN

#### 1

##### *East Africa and Lake Tanganyika*

THE destruction of the *Königsberg* (July 1915) removed the last menace to our trade routes in the Indian Ocean;<sup>1</sup> but it did not materially affect the East African campaign. British and German forces were still facing one another on the southern boundaries of the colony, and Belgian troops were stationed at various points along the shores of Lake Tanganyika. On the northern front there were still considerable German forces in the Taveta and Mombasa regions. General von Lettow-Vorbeck thus held practically the whole German colony, although on the coast we had seized Mafia Island early in the year. In the north-west we had established control of Lake Victoria Nyanza; but the German armed steamers on Lake Tanganyika were still practically unopposed. As there was no thought for the moment of starting a major operation against the colony from the sea, the naval problem resolved itself into restoring the blockade which had been suspended by the concentration off the Rufiji delta. The Commander-in-Chief at the Cape, Vice-Admiral H. G. King-Hall, found it almost impossible to carry out this duty with the forces at his disposal. Even before the *Königsberg* had been put out of action, the *Weymouth* had been ordered to the Mediterranean; the *Pyramus* was required for operations in the Persian Gulf, the *Laurentic* was detached for other duties, and the *Hyacinth* and *Pioneer* needed refitting. The Commander-in-Chief was thus left with the *Challenger*, the *Laconia*, the tug *Duplex*, and a few whalers to deal with the German supply ships. In this he was only partly successful: for the Germans found a means of salvaging a great deal of the munitions left in the wreck in Mansa Bay. On the other hand, the Commander-in-Chief managed to send an expedition up the river at Lindi and to put the German

<sup>1</sup> See Vol. III., pp. 66-7.

supply ship *Präsident* out of action. During the autumn months his anxieties were very great; the military authorities seemed to fear that if the Germans concentrated against Mombasa they might well carry it, and he could only tell them that he would be able to do little or nothing to help if the attack were delivered. Fortunately, General von Lettow-Vorbeck was not in a position to dissipate his resources in a large undertaking of doubtful issue; and by the end of the year his position was made still more difficult by the arrival of a British naval reinforcement which he could not possibly have foreseen.

Since the outbreak of war the Germans had controlled the waters of Lake Tanganyika. It was clear that if this control could be wrested from them by the Allies, it would greatly assist the conduct of joint operations by Nyassaland, Rhodesian and Belgian forces. But the German flotilla, though it consisted only of three armed steamers, all slow and small, and two unarmed motor boats, was supreme and unchallenged. It seemed indeed unchallengeable, for between Tanganyika and any practicable British base there lay more than 3,000 miles of African bush, narrow hill track, and primeval forest.

The Admiralty, nevertheless, determined, in April 1915, to treat these waters as an outlying sea within the sphere of British naval power, and to place an adequate naval force upon them. Two fast motor boats were selected, of 40 feet length, 8 feet beam, and 15 knots speed, armed each with a 3-pounder and a Maxim gun. These were to be shipped to Cape Town, carried by rail thence to Fungurume in the Belgian Congo, a distance of 2,500 miles, then drawn 140 miles by steam tractors to Sankisia, after which eighteen miles of rail would bring them to the Lualaba River. If they could navigate this river for some 400 miles a final journey of 180 miles by rail would bring them to Albertville, the small Belgian harbour on the west side of Tanganyika, where some defensive batteries had been erected. The enemy harbours lay on the eastern side, which was part of German East Africa.

The command of the expedition was entrusted to Commander G. Spicer-Simson, R.N. With him went Lieutenant A. E. Wainwright, R.N.V.R., Sub-Lieutenant A. Dudley, R.N.V.R., and Dr. H. M. Henschell, Assistant-Director of the London School of Tropical Medicine, now commissioned as Surgeon, R.N. The engineers, gunners and other ratings brought the total number up to twenty-eight: all were experts, and all were bound in honour not to communicate to anyone living their destination or objective.

In spite of the formidable risks and difficulties encountered, this miniature expedition was attended by a good fortune almost as remarkable as that of Admiral Sturdee in his long voyage out to the Falklands. From first to last the enemy never received the least warning of what was afoot : the two motor boats, the *Mimi* and *Tou-Tou*, were shipped from Tilbury on June 11, landed at the Cape early in July, taken north by rail and detrained on August 4 and 5 at Fungurume, the railhead. There they were mounted on the fore-carriages of ox-wagons, and on the 16th and 17th their two traction engines and trailers were detrained. The road journey of 140 miles began next day, and took six weeks, during the latter half of which all drinking and fresh water had to be given up to the boilers of the traction engines. Besides this shortage and the plagues of heat, storm, dust and poisonous insects there were also the difficulties of the track to be overcome : the roads had to be made or widened, often by blowing up the forest trees, and nearly 200 bridges were built to carry the weight of the tractors and their load. The expedition, however, reached Sankisia safely on September 28, and two days later the Belgian railway brought them to Bukama. On October 1 the *Mimi* and *Tou-Tou* were launched upon the Lualaba River, which is in reality an upper reach of the Congo.

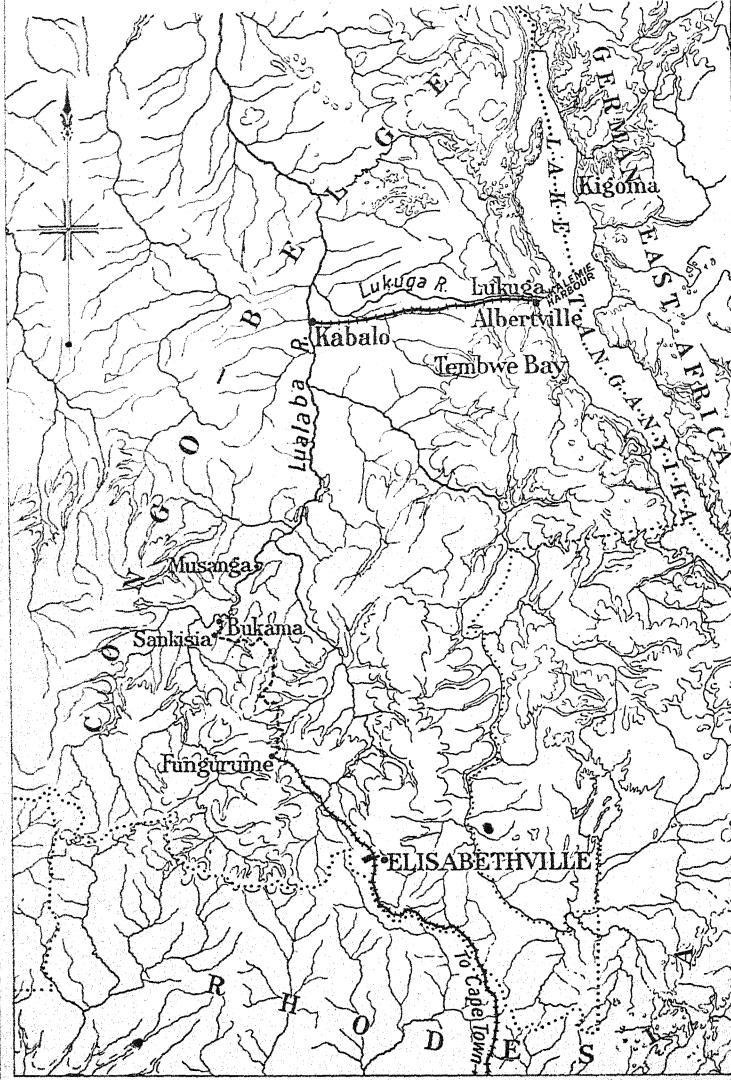
The river was dangerously low, so that the motor boats could not at first be allowed to use their own engines. Barrels were lashed under them to reduce their draught and protect their shaft brackets : eighteen paddlers were put on board each boat, and the stores were taken separately in barges. It was only on October 8, after frequently grounding, that Sub-Lieutenant Dudley found the water deep enough to run the boats under their own power and to take the barges in tow. Next day, at Musanga, a river steamer and a 200-ton lighter were waiting for them ; the barrels were taken off, and the equipment and eventually the motor boats themselves were got on board the lighter. After ten more days of towing, grounding and hauling-off, the flotilla at last reached Kabalo on October 21 ; there the motor boats were landed and once more entrained. By October 28 the whole expedition had arrived at their rendezvous—Lukuga, on the western side of Lake Tanganyika.

It was at once decided, with permission from the Belgian commandant, to build a small harbour under the guns of the fort. Rock was blasted and run down to the lake to form a breakwater. In spite of destructive gales the work was finished in about six weeks, and the harbour was named Kalemie.

# LAKE TANGANYIKA OPERATIONS.

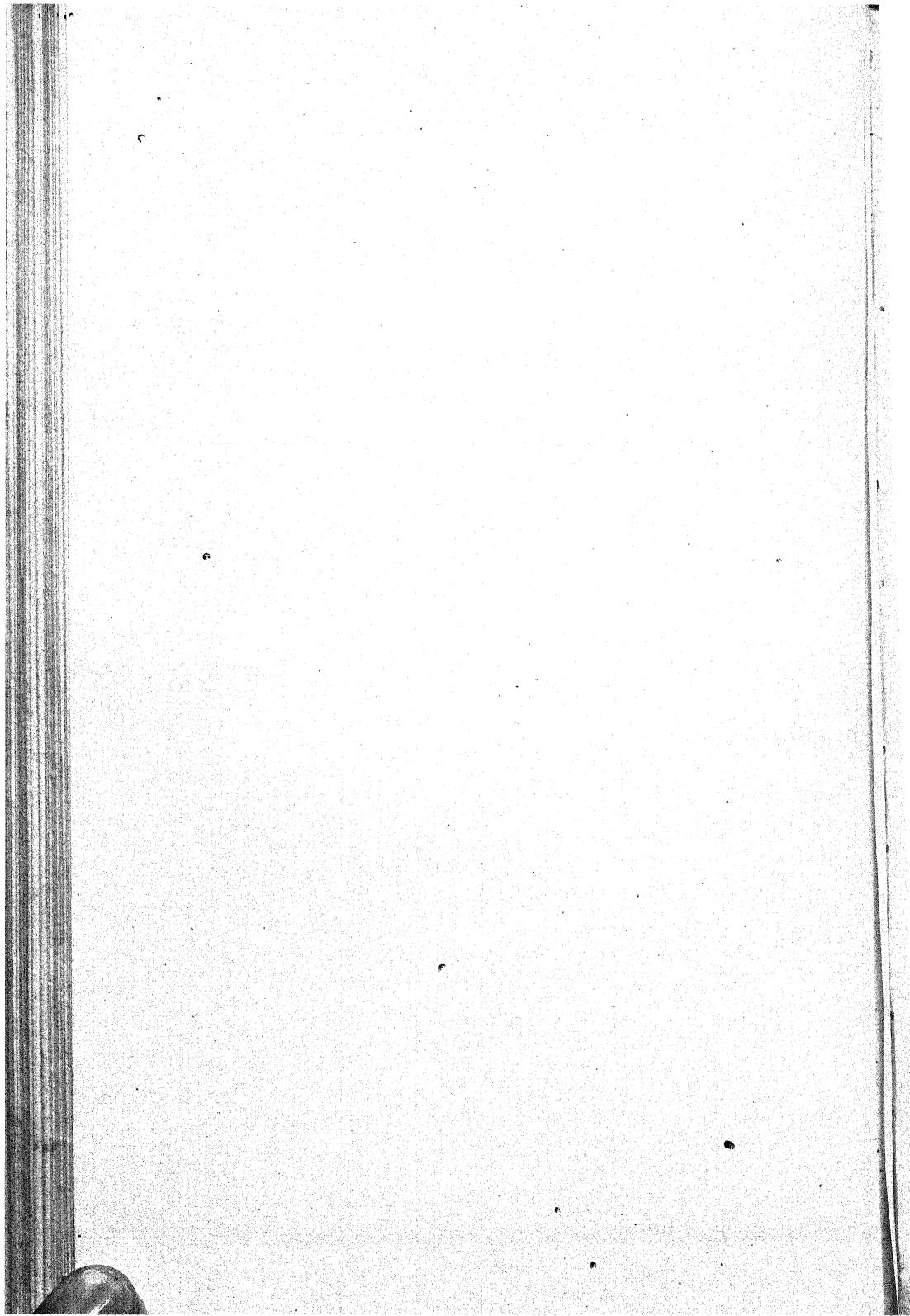
SCALE OF MILES.

MILES 40 20 0 40 80 120 160 200 240 MILES



PREPARED IN THE HISTORICAL SECTION OF THE COMMITTEE OF IMPERIAL DEFENCE.

[To face p. 82.]



On December 23 the *Mimi* and *Tou-Tou* were launched; on the 24th they did their trials and attained a speed of  $13\frac{1}{2}$  knots. On Christmas Day, the British Tanganyika Squadron being now ready for action, a sharp lookout was kept. At 9.25 a.m. on the 26th an enemy steamer was reported coming south. Commander Spicer-Simson allowed her to pass Kalemie, and at 11.25 a.m. ran out to cut her off from her base at Kigoma. Besides the *Mimi* and *Tou-Tou* he took with him the small Belgian motor boat *Vedette*, manned by British ratings and laden with petrol, in case the chase should be a long one. This, however, was not likely: the enemy was the wooden steam gunboat *Kingani*, 55 feet long, with a speed of 7 knots, and armed with a 37 mm. Hotchkiss gun. As this gun was mounted in her bows, Commander Spicer-Simson ordered *Mimi* to attack on her starboard quarter and *Tou-Tou* on her port quarter, and as the decks of both would probably suffer from the shock if their own guns were fired abeam, the attack was to be made in line abreast.

At 11.40 a.m. the enemy sighted the British boats, turned east and made off at full speed, being then 5,000 yards due south and well into Tembwe Bay. By 11.47 *Mimi* and *Tou-Tou* were within 2,000 yards of the *Kingani* and opening fire slowly in a choppy sea. The enemy returned the fire with gun and rifles, making no hits but compelling both boats to manoeuvre for position. *Mimi* fired one round a minute till 11.52, when the range had shortened and every shot was telling. She then began to increase the rate of fire and used lyddite instead of common shell. At 1,100 yards the first lyddite shell pierced the German gun shield, killing the captain and one of the two men; the next killed the warrant officer and forced some of the native seamen overboard. The German at the wheel, though dazed, continued to steer for Kigoma; but at 11.58 the chief engineer took command, hauled down his flag, showed a white handkerchief and stopped his engines.

The sea was now running high and it was judged impossible to board the prize. The *Kingani* was therefore ordered to steer for Kalemie, escorted by the *Mimi* and *Tou-Tou*. Shortly after reaching the harbour she filled and sank from the effect of the British gunfire, which had been extremely accurate. Within three days, however, she was repaired and refloated. A Belgian 12-pounder was mounted in her, and by January 15, 1916, she had been added to the British fleet under the name of the *Fifi*.

The Germans do not seem to have been put upon their guard by this loss: possibly they attributed it to the guns

of the Belgian fort, and were still unaware of the presence of the British naval force. At daybreak on February 9 a message was received at Kalemie that an enemy vessel had been seen steaming slowly southward. The British flotilla at once went out to meet her, and at 8.35 a.m. sighted her about 8,000 yards away, heading south-west at about 6 knots, and much disguised by the mirage caused by the glassy surface of the lake. She turned at once and made off, pouring oil upon her fires; but was rapidly overhauled. The *Mimi* was first to open fire, at 3,800 yards, and made several hits in the first few minutes. The *Fifi* then tried her 12-pounder at 7,500 yards, without effect; but when she had succeeded in reducing the range to 5,600 yards she scored some forty hits out of sixty shots. Of these one high-explosive shell burst in the engine-room, killed the engineer and destroyed an oil tank; another burst between the engine and boiler, wrecking the engine, and a third made a large hole in the ship's bottom and set fire to the oil with which the engine-room was now drenched.

Seeing his ship in flames and sinking, the German commander, Lieutenant Odebrecht, gave orders to abandon her. But when his boats were dropped astern they sank at once under the accurate British fire, and the survivors of the crew jumped overboard. Twelve Germans, including the commander, and eight natives, were picked up, and the *Mimi* took the wounded back to hospital at full speed. The captured vessel—the *Hedwig von Wissmann*, a wooden steam-boat 70 feet long, armed with two small guns—was burning fast, and shortly afterwards went down head foremost.

From information given by the native prisoners it appeared that the German force now remaining afloat consisted of two ships only: a fast unarmed motor boat, the *Wami*, 25 feet long, and the *Graf von Gotson*, a steamer even slower than the *Kingani*, but 200 feet long and armed with two 4-inch and two smaller guns. The latter, being greatly superior to all our ships in range and weight of metal, seemed likely, if she could be brought to action, to afford an instructive example of the relative values of speed and gun power. But the campaign ended in a much less interesting manner. Early one morning the British motor boats surprised the *Wami* transporting some native troops down the coast. The German commander, though at the moment well out of range, no doubt saw that he could not reach harbour before he was overtaken. He ran ashore on the German coast, landed his troops and set fire to his ship. Shortly afterwards the same realisation of the inevitable moved the German commander

at Kigoma to blow up the *Graf von Gotson* in harbour, and destroy with her all his small craft. The British Tanganyika Expedition—the smallest and most distant sent out during the war—had thus cleared Central Africa of German naval forces and prestige, and the twenty-eight officers and men composing it returned to other duties in other theatres of war.

In the meantime, the Government at home were taking steps to improve the position in East Africa. Reinforcements from India, home, and Cape Colony were ordered out in November, and at the end of the month Admiral King-Hall was informed that the old battleship *Vengeance* would leave England in December to support the attack against Dar es Salaam, which was to form part of the general operations of the coming year. The year 1916 opened with two successive changes in the command of the forces. On February 9, General Smith-Dorrien, who in spite of serious illness had taken over not long before from General Tighe, was relieved by General Smuts; and two days later Rear-Admiral E. F. B. Charlton assumed command of the naval forces, which then consisted of the *Vengeance*, three monitors, four cruisers, two of which were armed merchantmen, two gunboats and eight armed whalers.

The plan of campaign which was finally adopted did not, however, include the coastal operations which were originally contemplated. General Smuts decided that the German forces in the Moschi-Taveta area must be met and defeated before anything serious could be attempted against Dar es Salaam; and it was, in consequence, against them that he directed his concentration.

### *The Cameroons*

On the other side of the African continent, events in the Cameroons were moving more quickly. On August 25, 1915, about two months after the offensive attempted by the French and British forces in the early summer had failed, a general conference of Allied commanders assembled in Duala. They decided to renew the attempt. As before, the general plan was to deliver a converging attack upon Yaunde, but this time the details were different. The British force was to operate along the line Ngwe-Wum Biagas. Parallel to our advance, but with its lines of communication quite distinct, the main French column was to move from its advanced base at Eseka to the Yaunde-Kribi road between Olama and

Yaunde. In the southern area Colonel le Meillour's force was to advance from the eastern side of Muni towards Ebolowa, whilst General Aymerich pressed forward from Dume and Bertua. At the same time, subsidiary operations were to be undertaken in the extreme north, between the northern railhead and Ossidinge near the Nigerian boundary, and in the south, between Kampo and Ebajok, along the northern frontier of the Spanish enclave.

These movements were successfully carried out. On January 1, 1916, Yaunde fell, and during the next week, the attacking columns from the north, from the Belgian Congo, and from French Equatorial Africa all entered the town—a remarkable proof of the skill by which the widely spread operations had been co-ordinated. German resistance here was practically over; but a column of fugitive troops and refugees succeeded in escaping to the south-westward and getting into Spanish territory, for the Allied column from Kampo had not been able to make enough progress to cut the enemy's last line of retreat.

The Germans continued to hold out in the north until the middle of February, when Mora was captured.

It fell to Captain Carre, the Senior Naval Officer on the coast, and to Captain C. T. M. Fuller, who was in command of the British naval detachment, to give these military operations whatever support they could.

Effective as the blockade had been, means were found to supplement it; and strong amphibious patrols were maintained on the four rivers which traversed the zone of operations: the Sanaga, the Lokundje, the Nyong, and the Kampo. The duties of the Kampo river patrol increased in importance as the operations progressed. It was found that the enemy was maintaining a regular line of supply from the coastal towns in Muni to Yaunde; the naval patrol, by their grip upon the line of the river, succeeded, in the end, in cutting off this source of supply, and, at the close of the campaign, General Dobell<sup>1</sup> reported to the Government that without the assistance which the Allied naval forces had rendered him "by sea, creek, and land," the military forces "could not have accomplished the task which lay before them."

Captain Carre raised the blockade on February 29; and a month later the French and British Governments signed a Convention for administering the conquered territory. With the exception of a small strip running north-eastwards from Victoria to the Nigerian frontier south of Yola, the whole

<sup>1</sup> See Vol. III., pp. 4-6.

colony was placed under French control; but this arrangement was temporary and was not to influence the terms of the final settlement. So long as the war lasted the British naval and military forces were to have an unrestricted use of the port of Duala. With the signing of this Convention on March 29 the campaign ended.

## 3

*Mesopotamia*<sup>1</sup>

Before the Turks closed in on Major-General C. V. F. Townshend at Kut al Amara,<sup>2</sup> Captain W. Nunn, R.N., withdrew downstream with the bulk of his river flotilla; only the *Sumana* remained with the beleaguered garrison.

Early in January, 1916, he concentrated his flotilla at Ali Gharbi on the Tigris. It consisted of four new gunboats—the *Butterfly*, *Cranefly*, *Dragonfly* and *Gadfly*<sup>3</sup>—two steam launches fitted for minesweeping, and a motor boat, sunk earlier in the war by the *Espiègle* and subsequently salved and rechristened the *Flycatcher*. A relief force under Lieutenant-General Sir F. J. Aylmer had already been assembled and was preparing to march on Kut. From Ali Gharbi to Kut the distance by land is about fifty miles, but by river it is greater owing to the numerous bends. Between Ali Gharbi and Hanna the country is open, the only considerable obstacle being the Wadi stream, which enters the Tigris from the north a few miles below Hanna. On the left bank between Hanna and Sannaiyat, a distance of about eight miles is a large area of marsh, and troops can only advance over this distance along a narrow corridor between the marsh and the river. The Turks thus had a strong defensive position on the left bank, from which to block the advance of the relief columns; but they decided to make their first stand lower down. As soon as they got news that British forces were assembling at Ali Gharbi, what troops they could spare were hurried down and took up a position astride the river about three miles below Shaikh Saad. The British force reached the Turkish lines on January 5, and it was decided to give battle on the following day. The British attacked on both banks, and the gunboats were chiefly employed in supporting the assault upon the Turkish right

<sup>1</sup> See Map 4.

<sup>2</sup> See Vol. III., pp. 226-9.

<sup>3</sup> Each was armed with one 4-inch, one 12-pounder, one 6-pounder, one 2-pounder Anti-aircraft pom-pom and four Maxim's.

flank. The battle continued with the greatest obstinacy for two days. Owing to the exhaustion of the troops but little progress was made on the 8th, but the Turkish commander withdrew during the night, and Shaikh Saad was occupied by the British troops on the following day (9th). After retiring beyond the Wadi the Turks returned and entrenched themselves on the right bank of that stream.

The British army and the flotilla followed up, and battle was again joined on the 13th. After desperate fighting during the whole of that day, the Turks were forced to withdraw during the night to escape disaster, and took up their position at Hanna, between the marsh and the river. The British flotilla made the first reconnaissance of the Turkish position, and during the 14th the *Gadfly*, with the Senior Naval Officer on board, was hit and damaged by a 4·8-inch shell, and had to be sent south to Abadan for repairs. On January 18 and 19 the gunboats bombarded the Hanna position, and on the 21st General Aylmer threw his troops against the Turkish lines. The gunboats supported the assault, and throughout the day the battle raged with varying fortunes; but by the evening it was quite clear that the British attack had failed; and with it the first attempt to relieve the garrison at Kut.

Meanwhile (January 19) Lieutenant-General Sir P. H. N. Lake had relieved General Sir J. E. Nixon, whose health had completely broken down, and on February 10 the control of the operations in Mesopotamia, which had hitherto been in the hands of the Government of India, was taken over by the War Office. There was no thought of abandoning Kut; but the Government and the High Command were doubtful how soon to renew the attempt at relief, and undecided as to the best manner of carrying out the operation. It was eventually decided, however, that General Aylmer should not attack until early in March, when reinforcements would have reached him, and that the main British thrust should be made on the right bank instead of against the Hanna position.

In March, when everything was ready for the new attempt, the general position had altered considerably. On the left bank the Turks were still holding the Hanna position, and a British force was facing them; but on the right bank their main line of resistance was much further back. It was called the Es Sinn position, and consisted of a strong line of trenches, beginning at a point about fourteen miles above Hanna and eight miles below Kut, and running in a southerly direction to a point called the Dujaila redoubt; from here short lengths of trenches ran south-westwards to the Shatt al Hai. On the

left bank a line of trenches continued the defensive line as far as the Suwada marsh. There were on the right bank advanced positions at Abu Rumman and Bait Isa. Both sides had been reinforced; and the river flotilla had been strengthened by the arrival of the larger "China" class gunboats *Mayfly*, *Sawfly*, and *Mantis*. General Aylmer decided to contain the Turks at Hanna, and to carry the Turkish position on the right bank by surprise. He, personally, took command of the attacking force, which was sub-divided into two columns, one under Major-General H. D'U. Keary, the other under Major-General G. V. Kembell. The force was assembled secretly on the right bank, and marched south-westwards through the night, so as to attack the Dujaila redoubt at dawn on March 8. After it was captured it was hoped that the Turkish army could be driven towards the river and completely defeated. The road to Kut would then be open, for the Dujaila position was the last serious obstacle between the beleaguered garrison and our advancing columns. On the left bank, Major-General Sir G. J. Younghusband demonstrated against the Hanna position to pin down the Turks in front of him, and three boats of the river flotilla bombarded the right flank of the enemy's position. The remainder were kept downstream to guard the camp at Wadi. The operation failed. Delays and misunderstandings held up the attack against the Dujaila redoubt; and when finally it was delivered it did not succeed. At nightfall, General Aylmer ordered a withdrawal to Wadi.

Lieutenant-General Sir G. F. Gorringe now (March 12) succeeded General Aylmer in the command of the relief force. His plan was to make a steady, methodical progress along both banks, and to force a way through the corridor between the Suwaikiya marsh and the sea. It was hoped that, after the Hanna, Fallahiya, and Sannaiyat positions on the left bank had been cleared, and the Turks driven out of their positions at Abu Rumman and Bait Isa on the right bank, they could be defeated decisively on the Es Sinn position in front of Kut. At the time fixed for the operations to begin the Tigris rose and overflowed its banks, and it was not until April 5 that the assault was made on the Hanna position. This was carried without difficulty, as was also the Fallahiya position; but the attempt to carry the Turkish trenches at Sannaiyat failed. It was now decided to operate on the right bank and to attempt to force the Es Sinn position, while containing the enemy at Sannaiyat. Bait Isa was occupied, but further progress was so slow that the only chance of relieving Kut in time appeared to be a direct assault on the

Sannaiyat position. This was made on April 22; the troops, however, were so exhausted at the end of it, that three or four days' rest would be necessary before they would be capable of making any further effort.

The river flotilla, which by now had been further reinforced by the *Waterfly* and *Greenfly*, could take little part in the long and disappointing operations which followed the failure against the Dujaila redoubt; but it fell to them to make the last attempt to reach Kut. When General Gorringe was compelled to abandon his assault against the Sannaiyat position, the garrison at Kut was fast running short of provisions; and as the relief operations were likely to continue long after the end of April, it was urgently necessary to revictual the town by some means or other, and so prolong the defence. Vice-Admiral Sir Rosslyn Wemyss, Commander-in-Chief, East Indies, had visited the front on April 12, and reported to General Lake that the chances of getting a special river steamer through to Kut were very small; but that he would attempt it if assured that a successful venture would add to the chances of relieving the garrison. General Lake assured him that it would, and orders were at once issued to fit out the river steamer *Julnar*; when ready, she was stripped of all surplus woodwork and covered with protective plating. Although the chances of success were extremely small, and the chances of death, wounds, sickness and imprisonment proportionately high, practically all the officers and men of the river flotilla volunteered for the service; Lieutenant H. O. B. Firman, R.N., was selected for the command; Lieutenant-Commander C. H. Cowley, R.N.V.R., was made second in command on account of his great knowledge of the river; and Engineer Sub-Lieutenant W. L. Reed, R.N.R., was placed in charge of the engines; the crew consisted of twelve specially selected ratings.

At eight o'clock on the evening of April 24, the *Julnar* left Fallahiya, with 270 tons of supplies on board; as she passed the British lines, our troops started a tremendous racket with artillery and machine-gun fire, to distract attention and drown the noise of the *Julnar's* engines. The night was dark and overcast and there was no moon. The Turks knew that the attempt was going to be made, and their outposts on the bank soon reported that a steamer was passing their positions. Rifle fire was soon opened upon her, but Lieutenant Firman held on steadily at 6 knots over the bottom: owing to the strong current he could do no more. At Sannaiyat the rifle fire became extraordinarily heavy; but the *Julnar* was taken past it and negotiated round all

the bends as far as the Es Sinn position, only ten miles from Kut. Here she came under artillery fire for the first time; and it increased steadily as she passed along the reach of the river between the Es Sinn trenches and Maqasis. Some moments before she reached the Maqasis bend a shell struck the bridge. Lieutenant Firman fell dead, thinking doubtless that success was in sight, for the *Julnar* was then within about eight miles of the town. Lieutenant-Commander Cowley, though wounded by the same shell, now took charge. In a few more minutes the *Julnar* struck a cable which had been stretched across the river at Maqasis, and drifted on to the right bank of the river near the fort. She could not be got off, and Lieutenant-Commander Cowley surrendered. The Turks harboured nothing but a desire for vengeance against an officer who had shown such dauntless courage.<sup>1</sup> Some time after they had carried off their prisoners the Turks separated Lieutenant-Commander Cowley from his men, and he was never heard of again; but there are strong grounds to believe that he was shot by his captors in cold blood.

At Kut the garrison heard the rifle fire along the river bank grow nearer and nearer, and towards midnight they heard an outburst of firing from the Maqasis reach, followed by a complete silence. At one o'clock General Townshend reported that the *Julnar* had not arrived, and during the morning an aeroplane reconnaissance showed that she was in the enemy's hands. There was now no hope for the beleaguered garrison, and on April 29 General Townshend surrendered.<sup>2</sup>

## 4

*The Baltic*

We have already recorded that in August 1915 in the Baltic the failure of the German combined attack on Riga had been immediately followed by the abandonment of the attempt to turn the flank of the Russian army, and the withdrawal of the German forces from the coasts of Courland and Livonia.<sup>3</sup> Our share in the defensive operations had been limited to the assistance rendered by two submarines, *E 1* and *E 9*, but the successful attack of Commander N. F. Laurence in *E 1* on August 19 was believed to have contributed largely to the discouragement of the German Command,

<sup>1</sup> Lieutenant Firman and Lieutenant-Commander Cowley were awarded the Victoria Cross posthumously and the crew were decorated.

<sup>2</sup> See Moberly: *Mesopotamia Campaign*, Vol II., pp. 457-8.

<sup>3</sup> Vol. III., pp. 136-7.

and our Russian Allies were enthusiastically grateful. They had already shown their reliance on us by petitioning for more submarines to be sent out; one of them—*E 8*—was by this time on her way to Revel.

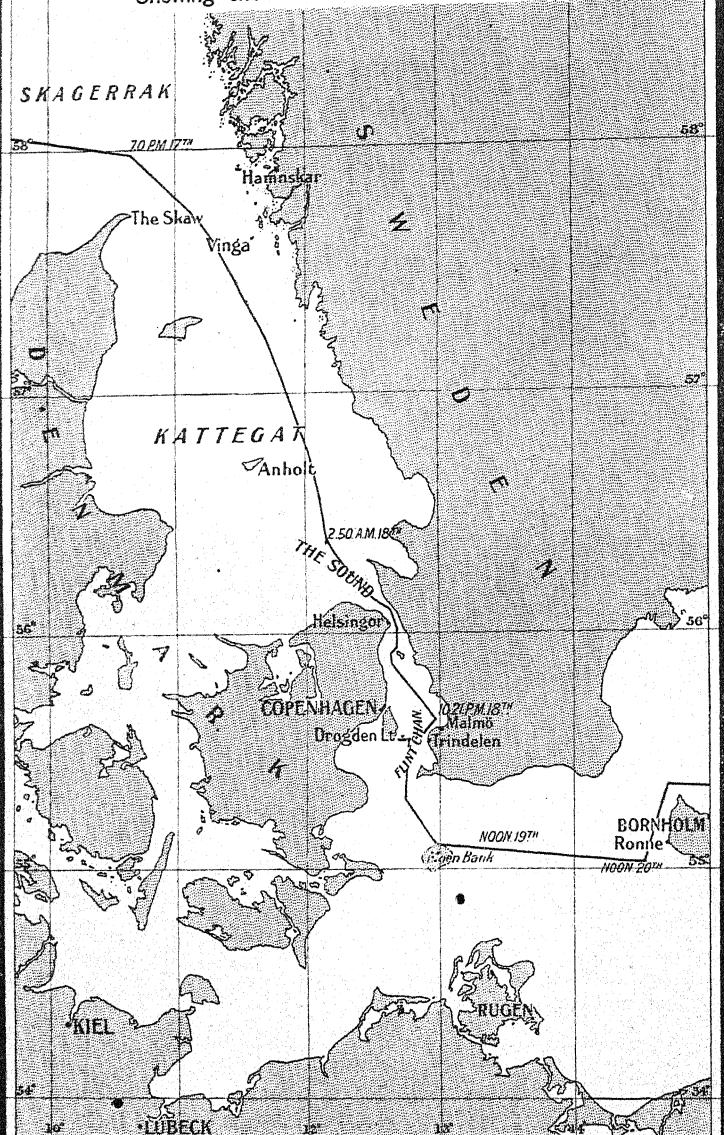
Lieutenant-Commander F. H. H. Goodhart's account of the voyage of *E 8* is a plain and terse document. He passed easily up the Skagerrak, keeping well out of the central line of traffic, but in the afternoon he had to dive and pass under a whole fleet of steam trawlers. Only at 7.0 p.m. was it possible to come to the surface again. He then ordered full speed, rounded the Skaw and entered the Kattegat. In the fading twilight several merchant steamers were seen going north. The shore and island lights twinkled out one by one. The night was short. By three o'clock on August 18 he was obliged to dive and lie quietly on shoal ground while the traffic went over him. At 5.25 a.m. he ventured to the surface, but was put down quickly by a steamer. At seven o'clock he ventured again, and scurried along for one-and-a-half hours in a friendly mist. Then he dived again and crept along at 3 knots, till at 1.0 p.m. he was off the entrance to the Sound.

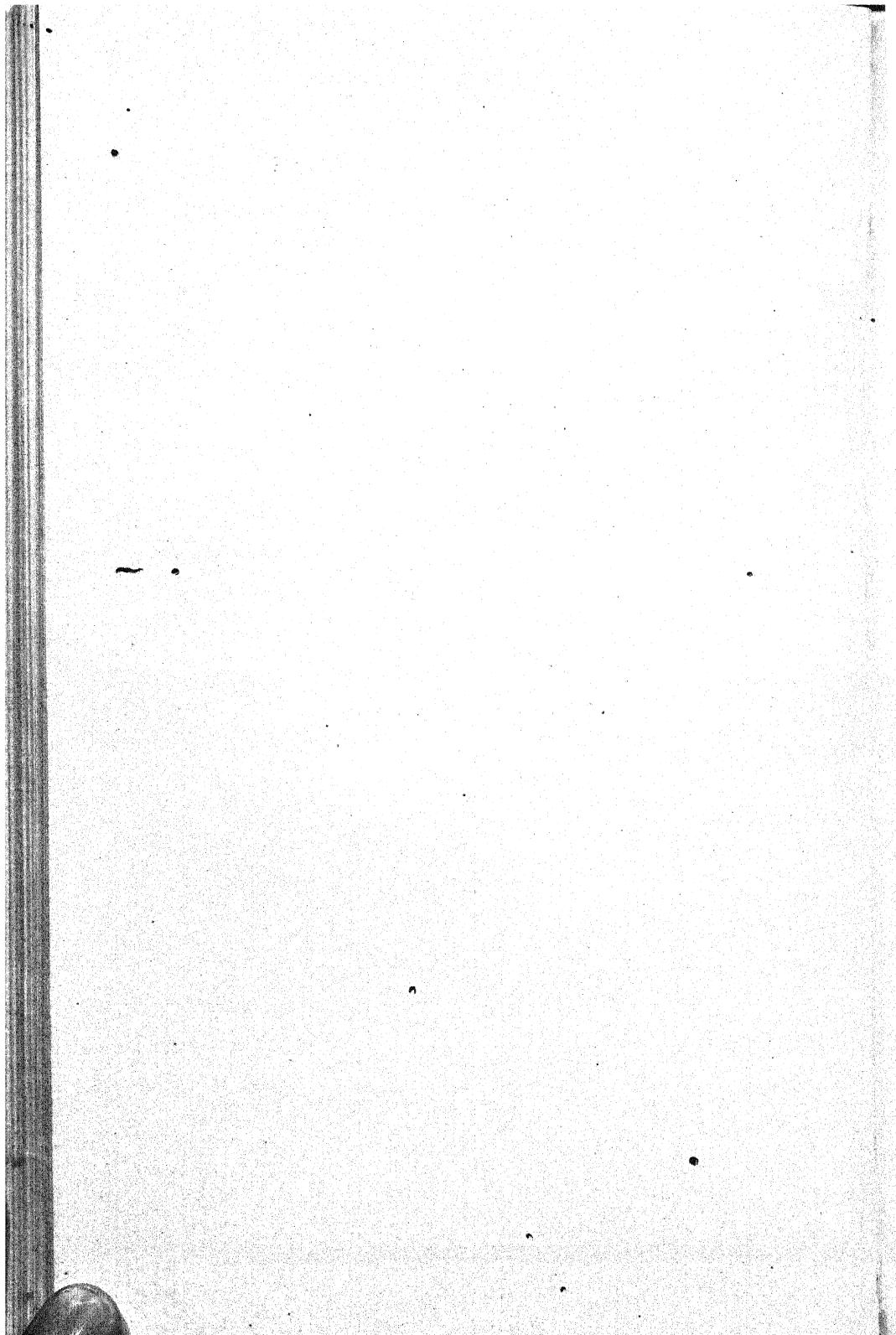
Here he had to make the choice between going forward submerged or waiting for darkness and then attempting the channel on the surface. He was confident of being able to get to his position under water, and decided accordingly to continue diving into the Sound and wait for night inside. He proceeded at 50 feet, and by 3.6 p.m. had verified his position, coming up to 21 feet to do so. He then went down again to 50 feet and altered course to pass through the Northern Narrows. At 4.10 p.m. he was east of Helsingør Light. At 5.20, after another observation, he went to bottom in eleven fathoms, feeling comfortably certain that he had not so far been detected.

At 8.15 p.m. he rose to the surface. The Danish shore was bright with many lights, the Swedish shore was dark. *E 8* went south-westward on the surface, altering course to avoid being seen by two destroyers, who were going north at a great pace along the Danish shore. One of them suddenly turned south, but then stopped, as if in doubt. *E 8* ran on into still more dangerous waters; the lights of Copenhagen were blazing brightly, and in Middle Ground Fort a search-light was working. Now and again it struck upon the submarine. Then several fishing-boats came past, then two red lights in a small craft going south over to the Danish shore. She was on the submarine's starboard beam for some time, but luckily not near enough to see her, and

## ENTRANCE TO THE BALTIC.

Showing the track of E. 8. August, 1915.





Lieutenant-Commander Goodhart headed boldly for Flint Channel.

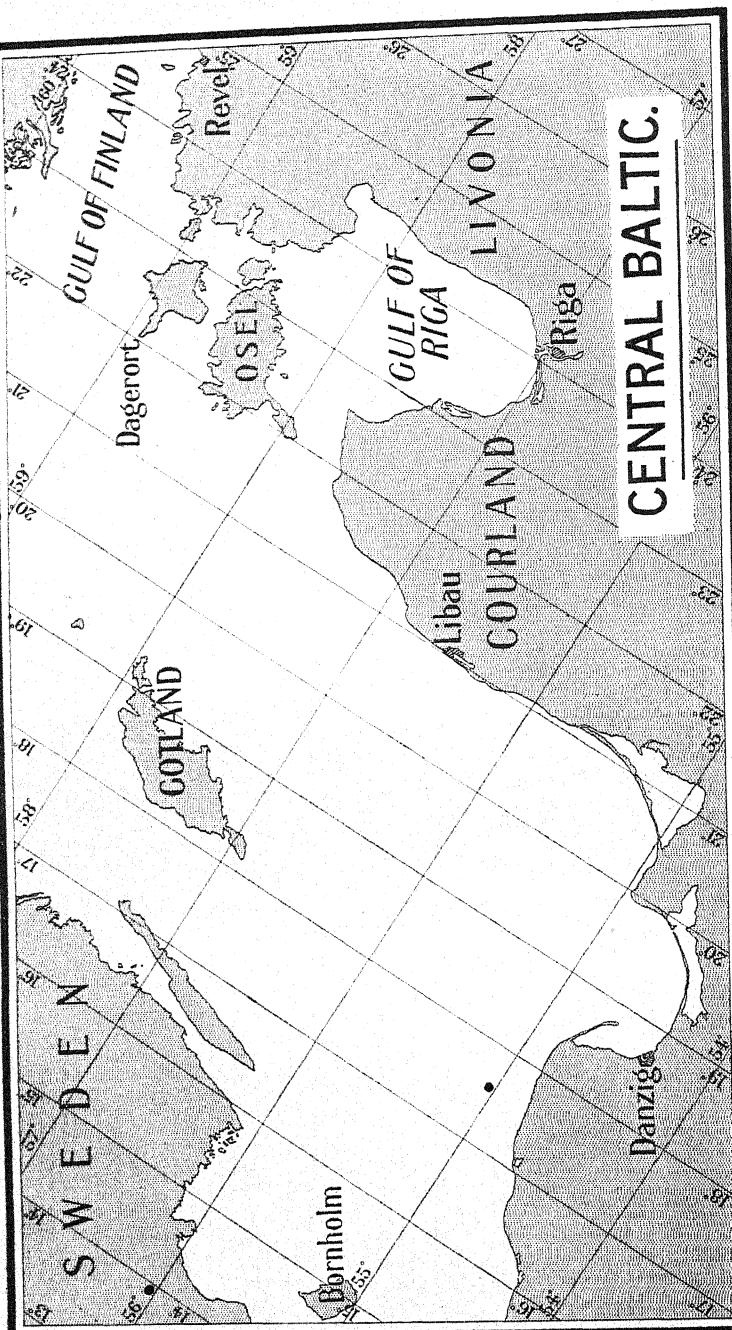
Off Malmo the shore lights were dazzling, and it was extremely hard to fix a position. There were many fishing-boats about, each carrying two bright lights. Lieutenant-Commander Goodhart ordered the boat to be trimmed down with upper deck awash, and proceeded with one engine only, at 7 knots. He steadied his course through Flint Channel, passing at least twenty vessels towards the western end of it, some carrying two and some three white lights, and one making searchlight signals in the air. He had no sooner avoided the fishing-boats by a change of course, than he ran past a small tramp showing first a green light, and then three white ones. The tramp seemed to have anchored, but two other vessels had to be avoided and then the ship which had been signalling with the searchlight. Immediately afterwards, when just north-east of the lightship with her three vertical red lights, *E 8* was sighted by a small torpedo boat or trawler as she was creeping by within 200 yards of her. Probably it was the searchlight in Copenhagen which had shown up the submarine. In any case the pursuit had now begun. The enemy boat lighted red and green flares and altered course towards the submarine. *E 8* dived, but struck bottom—"very strong bottom"—at 19 feet on gauge, which immediately decreased to 14 feet. At 14 feet she tried to proceed on her course, but the ground was very uneven, and a succession of bumps brought her to a dead stop. It was now 11.40 p.m. After an anxious quarter of an hour Lieutenant-Commander Goodhart rose to the surface. The Drogden Lightship was on his starboard quarter. A large destroyer or small cruiser was ahead of him, showing lights. She was only 200 yards away, but Lieutenant-Commander Goodhart trimmed *E 8* deep, and stole past on his motors. But four minutes later he found a destroyer right ahead and only 100 yards from him. Again he dived instantly, meaning to go down to 23 feet; but at 16 feet the boat struck bottom heavily on the starboard side, carrying away all blades of the starboard propeller. *E 8* lay on the bottom and listened to her pursuers overhead.

At 12.15 a.m. on the 19th the boat moved again and got down to 18 feet, but was still bumping badly. At 12.19 Lieutenant-Commander Goodhart stopped her and came silently to the surface. The destroyer was there, close on his starboard beam. One minute later he dived again, as slowly as he dared, and at 17 feet glided away on his course, the depth of water fortunately increasing as he went. For a long

time he seemed to be escaping, but at 2.10 a.m. he struck bottom at 18 feet. After waiting an hour he rose to the surface, only to see the destroyer again, this time on his port beam, but she was now a mile off, and *E 8* dived again unperceived. When she came up once more at 7.15 there was nothing in sight. At 8.53 she dived for a steamer, and at 10.40 for a destroyer. This was well enough, but by now the battery was running very low. Her commander decided that he must find a good depth, go to the bottom and lie there till darkness should give him a chance of recharging. From 10.40 a.m. till 6.40 p.m. *E 8* lay like a stone in 23 fathoms.

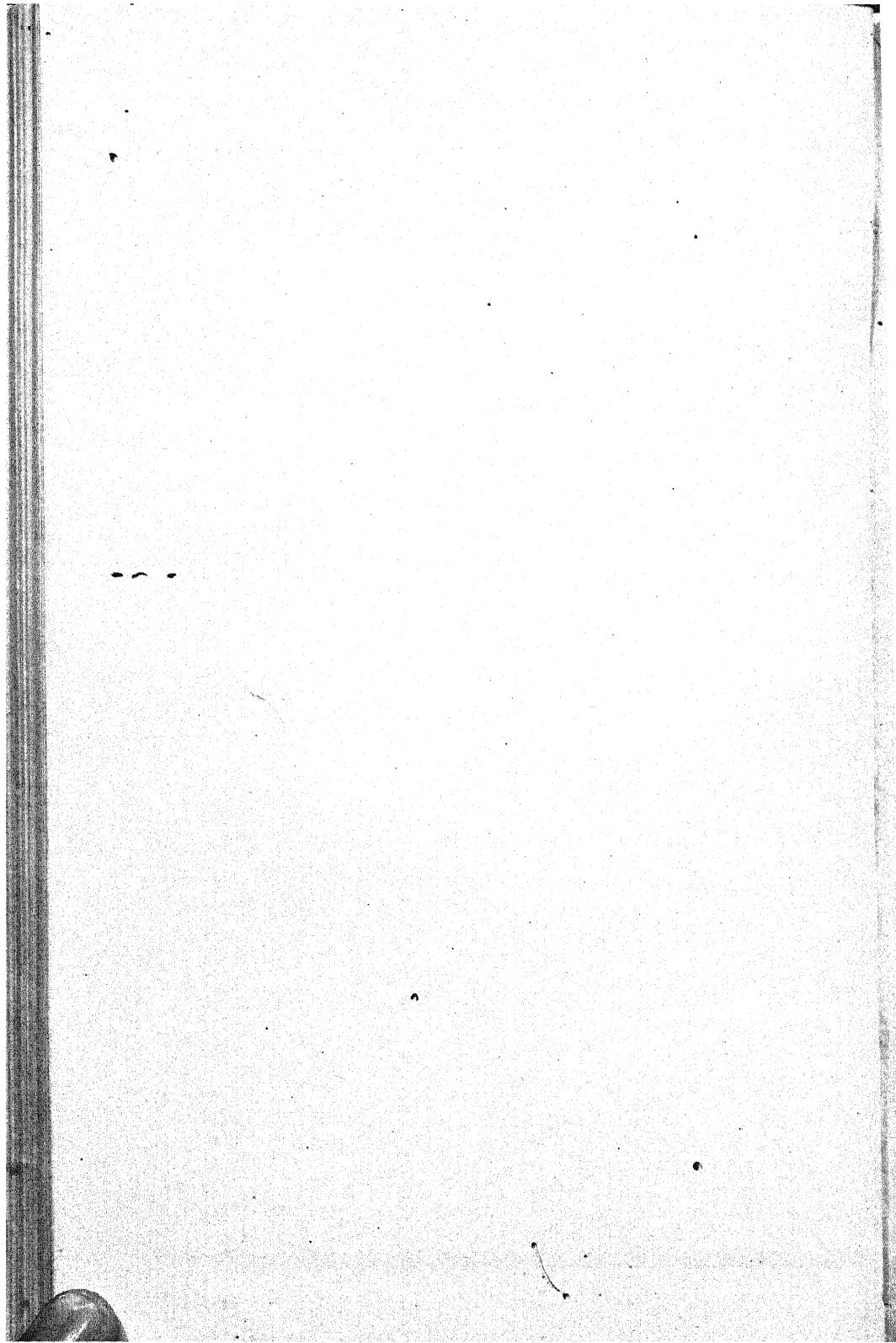
When she rose at 6.40 a Swedish steamer was patrolling ahead of her. At 8.25 a patrol of three vessels was close astern, and moving very slowly eastwards. The moon was too bright for surface work and Lieutenant-Commander Goodhart dived again. At 9.30 he tried once more, but was put down by a destroyer to the southward. It was not until ten minutes before midnight that he found a space of sea where the boat could recharge in peace. Even this was only practicable for two hours; daylight comes early in northern waters. It was now August 20. At 2.0 a.m. *E 8* dived again, and lay in 17 fathoms while her commander spent time and imagination upon the chart. He was well out of the Sound now and clear of the Swedish coast. On his starboard beam lay the island of Rügen, further back on his quarter the channel that leads to Lübeck and to Kiel. Right ahead was the island of Bornholm, which he must pass unperceived, and beyond it the whole expanse of the Baltic lay open to him.

At 9.0 a.m. he rose to the surface, but dived again at noon. He was now not far west of Rönne, and as he wished to make sure of passing Bornholm unobserved, he decided to remain on the bottom till dark, then slip by and recharge his batteries for a long run north by daylight. By 7.0 p.m. he was on his way, and eight hours later he was passing the east coast of the great island of Gotland. At 9.2 p.m. on the 21st he dived for a light cruiser, which passed overhead forward; at ten o'clock he returned to the surface and proceeded north-east, running past the entrance to the Gulf of Riga and the island of Oesel. By 1.0 a.m. on August 22 he had to dive for daylight; but by three o'clock he was up again and going full speed on his course. At 8.30 a.m. he sighted Dagerörт ahead and joined *E 9* (Commander Max Horton). In company with her and a Russian destroyer, he passed into the entrance of the Gulf of Finland; and by 9.0 p.m. *E 8* was secured in Revel harbour. Within twenty-four hours of his arrival, Lieutenant-Commander Goodhart had docked and



*PREPARED IN THE HISTORICAL SECTION OF THE COMMITTEE OF IMPERIAL DEFENCE*

[To face p. 94.]



overhauled her, replaced her broken propeller, and reported her ready for sea.

The career of *E 8* in the Baltic was long and successful. On October 5 she captured the steamer *Margarete* of Königsberg and destroyed her by gunfire. On October 19 she arrived on her station to the west of Libau, and for four days watched the trawlers and destroyers patrolling the harbour near the swept channel. Their movements were always very cautious, and owing to the minefield he never got near them. During the 22nd, however, an armed trawler came out of Libau and took up her station off one of the swept channel buoys; at dusk she began to show flares as though to mark the approach for vessels entering or leaving. Lieutenant-Commander Goodhart watched all night, and at some time after half-past eight on the following day he saw smoke on the horizon as of a ship leaving Libau, and altered course to intercept her. When she appeared she proved to have three funnels and two very high masts, and was seen to be going west with two destroyers, zigzagging—one on each bow.

Lieutenant-Commander Goodhart ran on at  $7\frac{1}{2}$  knots till he got within 3,000 yards, when he eased to 5 knots in order to lessen his wake. The wind was slight from S.S.E. and there was bright autumnal sunlight. The conditions were ideal for an attack from the southward. All tubes were made ready; the enemy came on at an estimated speed of 15 knots. At 9.28 the port destroyer passed ahead. Four minutes later Lieutenant-Commander Goodhart fired his bow tube at the warship's forebridge.

His range was about 1,300 yards, and after one minute he observed a vivid flash on the enemy's waterline at the point of aim. This was immediately followed by a very heavy concussion, and the entire ship was hidden instantly in a huge column of thick grey smoke. Evidently the torpedo had exploded the fore magazine. The air was filled with debris, and the smaller pieces began falling in the water near the submarine. In one minute more *E 8* was sliding down to 50 feet, and there she stayed for eight minutes, to give the remainder of the wreckage ample time to come down. At 9.42 Lieutenant-Commander Goodhart rose to 20 feet, and took a survey through his periscope. There was no sign of the big ship. The two destroyers had closed on to the scene of the explosion. Lieutenant-Commander Goodhart decided not to attack them, because, for all he knew, they were ignorant of his presence; if so, they might very probably imagine the damage to have been done by a mine, and give him future opportunities. An hour later he saw four

destroyers hovering about the place of the wreck : he turned away and they made no attempt to follow him. At dawn next day he reported by wireless, and proceeded to his base. His quarry afterwards proved to be the *Prinz Adalbert*, a German cruiser of nearly 9,000 tons.

In the meantime *E 19*, Lieutenant-Commander F. N. Cromie, and *E 18*, Lieutenant-Commander R. C. Halahan, had arrived at Revel. Seeing that the enemy's naval forces in the Baltic had now been reduced, and had withdrawn to the area near the line of communications between Libau and the southern Baltic, our submarines were ordered to operate in two sections, one to hold up the ore trade between Sweden and the German ports, the other to waylay any warships which might pass between Libau and Dantzig. They achieved a remarkable measure of success. At 8.0 a.m. on Monday October 11 Lieutenant-Commander Cromie "started to chase merchant shipping." At 9.40 a.m. he stopped the *Walter Leonhardt*, from Lulea to Hamburg, with iron ore. The crew abandoned ship, and were picked up by a Swedish steamer stopped by *E 19* for the purpose. The empty vessel was then sunk by a charge of gun-cotton. By noon Lieutenant-Commander Cromie was chasing the *Germania* of Hamburg, signalling her to stop immediately. As she continued to run and soon went ashore, he came cautiously alongside to save her crew, but found that they had already abandoned ship. He tried to tow her off, but failed to move her, for her cargo consisted of nearly 3,000 tons of the finest concentrated iron ore, from Stockholm to Stettin. He left her filling with water, and at two o'clock gave chase to the *Gutrune*. By three o'clock he had sent her to the bottom with her 4,400 tons of iron ore from Lulea to Hamburg, after placing her crew on board the Swedish steamer. At 4.25 he began to chase two more large steamers going south. In twenty minutes he had stopped one—the Swedish boat *Nyland*, with ore for Rotterdam and papers all correct—told her to proceed, and ten minutes later caught the *Direktor Rippenhagen*, with magnetic ore from Stockholm to Nadenheim. While she was sinking he stopped another Swede bound for Newcastle, and gave her *Direktor*'s crew to take care of. An hour later he was chasing a large steamer, the *Nicomedea*, who tried to make off towards the Swedish coast, but a shot across her bows brought her to. She proved to be a large and extremely well-fitted vessel, carrying 6,000 to 7,000 tons of magnetic ore from Lulea to Hamburg. The crew were sent ashore in boats, and *E 19* proceeded up the west of Gotland.

One more of *E 19*'s captures may be mentioned because it marks the difference between the British practice of submarine cruiser war and the German policy of sinking neutrals and enemies indiscriminately. During the morning of October 12 Lieutenant-Commander Cromie stopped the *Nike*, and went alongside to examine her. He found her to be in iron ore from Stockholm to Stettin, under command of Captain Anderson, whose passport, from the Liverpool Police, showed him to be a Swede. In accordance with international law and old British custom Lieutenant-Commander Cromie sent Lieutenant Mee on board the *Nike* with a prize crew of two men, and ordered them to take the prize into Revel for further investigation.

The rest of the story exemplifies the difficulty of carrying on a naval war on behalf of Allies with a different set of problems from our own. The Russian Government was at this time seriously afraid of the possible results of interference with Sweden's Baltic trade. A fresh enemy in that quarter might make Russia's heavy burden altogether unbearable : it was therefore urgently suggested to us that we should release the *Nike*, in spite of the fact that she would undoubtedly be condemned by the British Prize Court as lawful prize. Sir Edward Grey, however, saw that this was an impossible course for us to take—it would be a breach in our system, an abandonment of our claim that our Prize Courts acted in pursuance of no arbitrary rules but of international law; and it would be constantly quoted against us as a precedent for the remainder of the war. Fortunately Sir Edward Grey had an expedient ready to his hand : the ship was lying at Revel, a Russian port, and he suggested that she should be formally handed over to the Russian authorities. Her return to the Swedes by them could not embarrass our Prize Court practice, for it was merely a courtesy by an Allied Power, and could form no precedent against us.<sup>1</sup>

Lieutenant-Commander Cromie ended the 1915 campaign with a success of a different kind. Cruising in the Western Baltic on the morning of November 7, he sighted a light cruiser and two destroyers, but was disappointed in his attempt to attack. Three hours later, at 1.20, in a favourable mist, he had a second chance. A light cruiser—perhaps the same—with one destroyer as escort, came on at 15 knots, steaming south and east. He dived at once, and at 1.45 fired his starboard torpedo. The range was about 1,100 yards, and the shot went home on the cruiser's starboard side forward. She immediately swung round in a large circle and then

<sup>1</sup> Grey, *Twenty-five Years*, II., pp. 109-10.

stopped dead. She appeared to be on fire and sinking; but Lieutenant-Commander Cromie was unwilling to leave her in uncertainty. He avoided the destroyer, passed under her stern, and manœuvred for a second shot. This was fired at 1,200 yards, and was aimed at the cruiser's mainmast, just abaft of which it actually struck. A double explosion followed: evidently the after magazine had blown up, and several large smoking masses were shot out some 200 yards in the direction of the submarine. The destroyer then opened a heavy fire on the periscope with high-explosive shell. *E 19* dived to throw out the range; but three minutes later she came up again to see what was happening. The cruiser—she was the *Undine*, of 2,650 tons—was gone; the destroyer was picking up a few survivors, and after a restless half-hour made off to the southward, leaving on the scene only a ferry-boat flying the German mercantile flag. Lieutenant-Commander Cromie arrived next day at Revel, where he reported the attack and added that under existing weather conditions it had been rendered possible only by the sound judgment and prompt action of Lieutenant G. Sharp, who was officer-of-the-watch at the time.

— — —  
*E 19* was not alone in her successful campaign against the German iron ore trade. For the past three weeks, Commander Max Horton in *E 9* had again been at work. In two successive days, October 18 and 19, he sank the *Soderham*, *Pernambuco*, *Johannes-Russ* and *Dal Alfoen*—four serious losses to the German gun factories, and even more serious blows to the courage of their carrying trade. The captain of the *Nike* told Lieutenant Mee on his voyage to Revel, that after *E 19*'s first raid no less than fifteen ships were held up at Lulea, awaiting convoy; and after *E 9*'s success the control of the Baltic seemed to have passed for a time out of German hands.<sup>1</sup>

Such a state of things could not, of course, be long maintained, for wintry weather soon made the Baltic impossible for submarines. *E 1* had returned to Revel on October 30, and did not put to sea again. On November 8, *E 8*, *E 9* and *E 19* came in, and on November 17 *E 18* returned to the base after three weeks' unsuccessful cruising. The campaign was over for the year.

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Mühlon, a Director of Krupp's, records in his *Journal of the War* (p. 226) on November 9, 1915: "I have learnt from a reliable source that there have been for some time past several English submarines in the Baltic; they are supposed to have their base at Libau. In consequence the German ships of war dare not sail out of Kiel, and even the trial trips of some newly launched ships have had to be postponed."

*The Mediterranean—The Evacuation of the Serbian Army*

The double onslaught upon Serbia began in the first days of October;<sup>1</sup> and it was soon evident that the Serbian armies would not be able to stop it. Greatly outnumbered, and attacked simultaneously from the north and east, they were steadily driven back; and on October 22, whilst the northern armies were still fighting round Shabatz and Negotin, Uskub was seized by the Bulgarians. A wedge was thus driven in between the Serbian armies and Salonica; and all effective communication between Serbia and the Aegean was severed. The result was that, whether the Serbians held their ground or retreated, they had henceforward to be supplied from the Adriatic, unless Uskub could be recaptured. On this point French and British military experts were sharply divided. Nearly three weeks after Uskub had fallen General Joffre still hoped that the Serbs might rally and force the Bulgarians out of it. The British military leaders were persuaded that the place was gone and that there was no longer any hope of supporting the Serbian army from Salonica.

On October 30, therefore, Sir Edward Grey instructed our Ambassador in Rome to take up the matter with the Italian Government; and to inform them that, if the Serbian army were to be kept from surrendering, it must be supplied from the Adriatic. As this sea was entirely under Italian naval control, the Government at Rome was asked to accept all the naval responsibilities of the new line of sea communications.

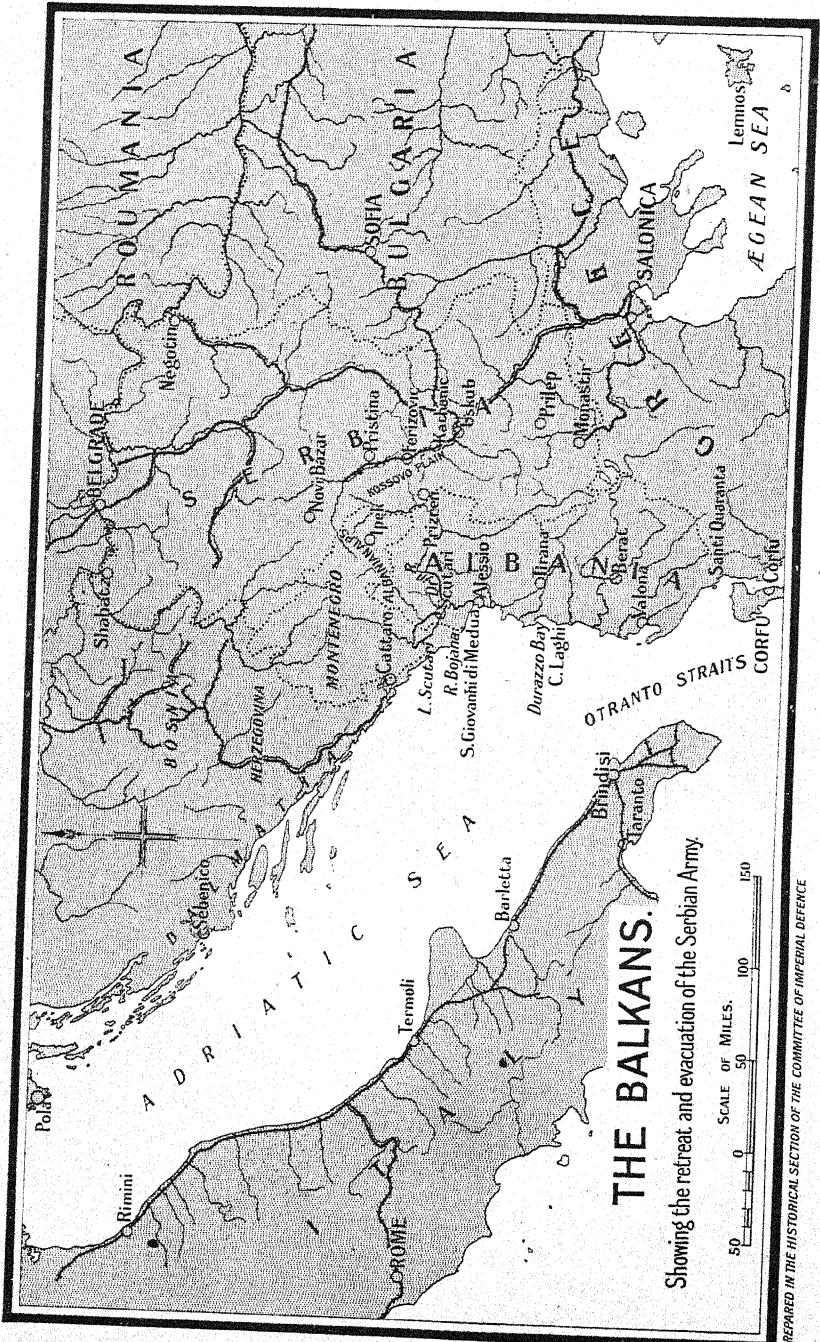
At the beginning of November the Serbian armies were grouped irregularly along the plain of Kossovo from Novibazar, through Pristina and Prizren. As the country between Novibazar and Scutari is traversed by the north Albanian Alps, it followed that, if pressed from the positions they then held, the Serbs would only be able to retire along the mountain road, which runs from Prizren to the sea along the upper gorges of the Drin valley. Even this was soon in danger, for the Bulgarian forces pressed rapidly up the railway from Uskub and strove to seize the last line along which the Serbians could retire. King Peter's armies now made their last effort. On November 5, whilst the Italian and British Governments were still negotiating, the Serbian armies turned on their pursuers, and a battle began near Ferizovic. For three days it raged with the utmost fury, and in the end the Bulgars were thrown back on Kachanik.

<sup>1</sup> See Vol. III., pp. 174-5.

There was then a lull in the operations, and the Serbian army commanders seem for the time to have hoped that they might yet be able to hold a line along the mountains between Novibazar and Prizren.

Sir Edward Grey's request had been referred to the Italian Naval Staff by Baron Sonnino, the Foreign Minister. The Italians, it would seem, did not wish any naval Power but themselves to make a big maritime effort in the Adriatic, and were thus far from being disinclined to do as we asked. On the other hand, their naval problem was not an easy one. Their principal striking force of five Dreadnoughts and six pre-Dreadnoughts was based mainly on Taranto, but with an advanced force at Brindisi. In support was Rear-Admiral C. F. Thursby's squadron of old battleships and light cruisers, which had been at Taranto since May, and a detachment of French destroyers. Between Brindisi and Venice the whole Italian coast was exposed to attacks from the sea, for the Italians had no intermediate harbour on which to base a coast defence squadron or groups of flotillas. The shore line was particularly vulnerable, for the main railway runs close to the coast from Rimini to below Termoli, and was thus liable to be damaged by bombardment for about 200 miles. From Barletta to Brindisi—a distance of about ninety miles—the railway was again exposed; but here the danger was not so great, as this southernmost section of the line was within immediate reach of the naval forces at Brindisi. The advanced force of two pre-Dreadnoughts, three cruisers, and forty-two torpedo boats and destroyers had its base at Venice. To this powerful outpost was allotted the duty of guarding the right flank of the line of armies on the Isonzo front.

The Austrian navy was considerably less powerful than the naval forces under the Italian Commander-in-Chief, but the shape and structure of the Adriatic gave the Austrian Naval Staff two marked advantages. In the first place, the bulk of their forces was based on Pola, and the Italian squadron at Venice was therefore constantly facing a superior concentration; and, secondly, the Austrians could always send detachments down to Cattaro or Sebenico through the channels between the Dalmatian islands and the mainland without being brought to action, for the Italians had no means of detecting such movements in time to counter them. A force of hostile cruisers based on Cattaro had, of course, exceptional opportunities for raiding the communications between southern Italy and Scutari, or northern Albania. When Sir Edward Grey's request was transmitted to the Italian Government the Austrians had, in fact, assembled at



THE BALKANS.  
Showing the retreat and evacuation of the Serbian Army.

SCALE OF MILES.  
50 0 50 100 150

PREPARED IN THE HISTORICAL SECTION OF THE COMMITTEE OF IMPERIAL DEFENCE



Cattaro an advanced force of some two heavy cruisers, three light cruisers, and seven torpedo craft, supported by two old battleships.

With these considerations in his mind, Rear-Admiral Pini, the Italian Chief of the Naval Staff, reported to his Government that the Italian navy could do what was asked of it, but that, as transports and supply ships in the southern Adriatic would need to be very carefully protected, the strain on the flotillas would be very severe. He therefore urged that the French contingent of destroyers should be brought up to allotted strength, and suggested that the British Government should send a detachment to assist. As the French destroyers had only been withdrawn from the Adriatic temporarily, they were sent back early in December.<sup>1</sup> We could not detach destroyers for the Adriatic, but later we sent four submarines to operate against Cattaro.

The negotiations between the Allies continued until the last week in November; on the 24th a committee, formed of an Italian naval captain, three officers from the Italian War Office, and the French and British Naval Attachés, met under the presidency of Admiral Pini. On the previous night Captain Seitz, in the Austrian cruiser *Helgoland*, with a small force of destroyers attached to him, had left Sebenico, and, after raiding the Otranto Straits, had gone up to Durazzo Bay. The damage done was not serious, but the Austrians had so timed their attack that it fell upon the first group of vessels detailed for transporting supplies. Six Italian steamers were now working between Albania and Italy, and one of these was sunk. The committee therefore met in face of a warning that the Italian navy would not be allowed to carry out its task unmolested. The difficulties ahead were serious. The three places where supplies could be landed, San Giovanni di Medua, Durazzo, and Valona, had landing places and piers adapted to the use of the trabaccoli—light sailing craft which have done the coasting trade for centuries—but that was all. Harbour facilities for moving large masses of supplies did not exist. The result could only be that unloading would always take a very long time, and, as San Giovanni di Medua and Durazzo were open roadsteads, there was every chance that the flow of supplies would be seriously interrupted by submarine attack. To Admiral Pini the enemy's recent activity was significant, as it contrasted with their previous attitude, and the Italian members of the committee raised once more the question of destroyer

<sup>1</sup> The 2nd French Destroyer Flotilla had been taken from Brindisi in October, and moved to the Eastern Mediterranean.

reinforcements. Our attaché, Captain D. A. H. Larking, answered that we had none to spare, but presented a plan for protecting the vessels which were unloading by a guard of drifters supported by light cruisers.

In answer to the Greek occupation of southern Epirus the Italian Government decided to seize and fortify Valona, and during November nets were laid across the entrance of the harbour and guns were landed. It would thus be comparatively immune from submarine attack; moreover its position—sixty-two miles from Brindisi and 130 miles from Cattaro, the nearest point of attack—was very much in its favour. These advantages were, however, outweighed by the badness of the roads leading inland. There is a rough line of communication between Valona and southern Serbia, but by the end of November there was no hope left that the Serbian armies would be able to retire on the Monastir district, where the track from Valona debouched. As the coastal road between Durazzo and Valona was little more than a mule track, the bay and the hamlets round it were practically cut off from western Serbia, where the Serbian armies were encamped. Further south Santi Quaranta had been occupied by the Greeks. In the end, therefore, the committee was compelled to override the naval objections to the northern landing places, and decided that provisions and supplies should be landed at San Giovanni di Medua and Durazzo, and, when possible, transported up the Bojana river to the lake of Scutari. In accordance with these decisions 1,500 tons of supplies were carried over during the next three weeks.

In the meantime, the Austro-Germans had resumed their advance against the last Serbian positions. On November 20 Novibazar fell, and three days later Pristina was captured by the enemy. Realising that their armies would be unable to resist further, the Serbian Generals decided to retreat to the sea; and on November 30 they crossed the Albanian frontier, driving before them the 25,000 Austrian prisoners whom they had captured earlier in the war. Their line of march down the Drin valley would necessarily bring them by Scutari to the coast at San Giovanni di Medua, which, of all the places available, was the least suitable as a port of embarkation.<sup>1</sup>

The committee met in Rome the same day that the Serbian armies crossed into Albania. The military news was contradictory. The Serbian Military Attaché, who knew that the army would soon be retiring to the sea, urged that supplies

<sup>1</sup> The exact line of march of the Serbian troops is a little difficult to follow. A fairly large group seem to have marched on Soutari through Ipek.

and motor lorries should be sent at once to San Giovanni di Medua. Mr. Lamb, the head of the British Mission at Scutari, on the other hand, had telegraphed that the Serbians would probably be able to hold a line between Ipek and Prilep, but that about 50,000 refugees were making for Scutari. As supplies were now being carried across with fair regularity, the committee confined itself to questions of detail. Meanwhile, the Italian War Office had decided to increase its garrison at Valona : 20,000 men, 3,000 horses, and 46 guns were detailed to reinforce the troops already there, and on the next day the transportation began, each convoy being escorted by a British cruiser and French or Italian destroyers. The naval responsibilities were thus increasing, and it was evident that the enemy intended to oppose the operations at sea to the utmost of his power. On December 4, the British light cruiser *Topaze* and the Italian destroyer *Ardente* were attacked whilst on escort duty; on the same day another Italian destroyer, the *Intrepido*, and the transport *Re Umberto* were sunk by mines off Valona, many lives being saved by the British drifters, netting the entrance. These attacks were followed by a raid on the transport route by the *Helgoland* and her destroyers. Leaving Sebenico at 8.30 p.m. on the 5th, they arrived in the Otranto Channel about five hours later, and cruised for three hours between the Italian coast and Cape Laghi, after which Captain Seitz turned north and sank several small craft in Durazzo Bay and at Medua.<sup>1</sup> The French submarine *Fresnel*, on guard in the latter district, grounded and was destroyed by gunfire from the Austrian ships.

Whilst the committee was working at the practical details of landing supplies on the coast and carrying them inland, the Serbian Headquarters Staff and Rear-Admiral E. C. Troubridge, the head of the British Naval Mission, were arriving in Scutari. For the next ten days the heroic Serbians straggled in. They had been fighting and retreating for seventy days, and were destitute of everything. As far as can be judged from the documents available, the mass of them were then encamped round Scutari, but there was another force further south near Tirana, composed mainly of the royal bodyguard and of the troops who had retreated westward when Monastir fell.

In the meantime, the naval forces at Brindisi were making a determined effort. The light cruisers carried out no fewer than sixteen sweeps and convoy trips between December 5 and 10, thanks to which about 2,000 tons of supplies were

<sup>1</sup> The exact composition of the raiding force is doubtful, but it is stated that a cruiser of the "Sankt Georg" type was present.

landed or carried across to San Giovanni di Medua. The difficulties of carrying the food on to Scutari were, however, very great : " Of the twenty trabaccoli now being used for unloading ships, two are still full of supplies, which have to be carried ashore, one sack at a time, by soldiers, from a kind of wharf. On shore, sacks of biscuits, barrels of petroleum, petrol, and stores of every description are accumulating, and lie exposed to attacks by aeroplanes and the weather. Had the Austrian cruisers hit the stores of petrol, Medua would, by now, be burned down. The stores are carried to Scutari on ox carts ; the road is so bad that the carts stand still for hours at a time and the journey takes three days. . . . If it begins to rain matters will be much worse." This report came from Lieutenant Accame, who had been put in charge of the roadstead. It was laid before Admiral Pini's committee at a meeting on December 10, and the Italian members at once urged that no further supplies should be sent to San Giovanni di Medua, but that the Serbian armies should be embarked at Valona. The British naval and military delegates answered that masses of half-famished and destitute troops could hardly be expected to march over a mule track until they had been fed and rested, and added that as far as they were informed 500 tons of food per week could be transported from San Giovanni di Medua to Scutari. In the end it was decided, on Admiral Pini's motion, that the provisions either actually landed or waiting would suffice to enable the Serbian armies to move southwards, and that every effort should be made to get them to do so. A further convoy of provisions was to be landed at Durazzo for the forces in the centre of Albania.

Nobody could doubt that the decision was sound ; whether it could be carried out was another matter. During the following week news began to come in of an Austro-Bulgarian concentration against the Serbian troops in central Albania. Their numbers were not large ; a brigade only had been located round Berat, but if, as seemed likely, they were the advanced guard of a serious thrusting force, the position was serious. In the opinion of the Italian generals, the Serbian troops, against whom the blow would fall, bore " no resemblance to an army," and could put up no serious resistance. The result would inevitably be that communications between northern and southern Albania would be severed, and the garrison at Valona brought into great danger. Fortunately the threat came to nothing, but it sufficed to throw our arrangements into uncertainty.

Hoping, doubtless, to keep a foothold on Albania, the

Serbs refused to move from the positions they then held, but they appealed to Admiral Troubridge to put some order into the harbour of San Giovanni di Medua, and placed all their troops under his orders. The need for a central controlling authority was indeed so obvious that the other Powers concerned soon took the same course. On December 19 Vice-Admiral Cutinelli, the Italian Commander-in-Chief at Brindisi, placed the Italian personnel, wireless station, and boats at San Giovanni di Medua under our Admiral's orders. The Montenegrins, who had occupied the place earlier in the war, did the same. Many sources of confusion were beyond control, but Admiral Troubridge did what he could by enforcing a few elementary rules of public hygiene and by organising parties for clearing the quays. After some consideration, he decided to leave the wrecks of the vessels sunk in the harbour where they were, as they formed a sort of obstacle to submarines. The business of clearing the port was made particularly difficult by the enemy's air attacks, which dislocated work, though they did little material damage. To counteract the nuisance, Admiral Troubridge placed a line of machine guns along the ridge near the harbour; by this means the aircraft were at least compelled to fly high.

The last contingent of Italian troops arrived at Valona on December 12, and two days later the evacuation of the Austrian prisoners, for whom a temporary camp had been provided a short distance outside that town, began. In the course of the next three weeks the entire 25,000 of these wretched cholera-stricken men were conveyed to Sardinia in two Italian and three French transports.

No less lamentable was the condition of the Serbian troops, while that of the refugees who had fled with the armies was even worse. Admiral Troubridge strove to relieve them as best he could, by organising them in groups and placing them under police officers. It was but little that he could do, after all. The only medical stores were contained in the medicine chest of a British destroyer. Several more medicine cases were sent over from Brindisi, but there were practically no doctors available to use them. Admiral Troubridge's great achievement was that he succeeded in feeding the community from the army stores which he was distributing, and in maintaining order amongst them. But the high death rate continued unchecked, and each day, as a vessel arrived, crowds of women and old men flocked to the Admiral and besought him on their knees to let them embark. Between December 10 and January 14 over 3,000 of these were carried away into Italy.

DEC. 1915

The Italians lost no time in putting Durazzo into a state of defence, for it was henceforth to be a base of supplies and a port of disembarkation. By December 20 they had brought up a brigade of infantry from Valona; landed eight heavy guns and a battery of anti-aircraft pieces and laid a minefield off the port. Quick as they were, they were only just in time, for, almost as soon as they had completed the work, the Austrians launched an attack against their lines of communication.

## 6

*The First Cruiser Action in the Adriatic*

On December 28, 1915, Vice-Admiral Fiedler, the Austrian Commander-in-Chief in Cattaro, had three old battleships—the *Wien*, the *Monarch*, and the *Budapest*—one heavy cruiser—the *Kaiser Karl VI*—three light cruisers—the *Helgoland*, the *Novara*, and the *Aspern*—and a considerable force of torpedo craft, concentrated under his immediate command.

Vice-Admiral Cutinelli, commanding the Allied force at Brindisi, had certainly a more powerful squadron,<sup>1</sup> but

<sup>1</sup> Austrian forces in Cattaro—

|                 |   |            |            |           |
|-----------------|---|------------|------------|-----------|
| <i>Budapest</i> | : | four 9·4"  | } six 5·9" | 17 knots. |
| <i>Monarch</i>  | : | two 9·4"   |            |           |
| <i>Wien</i>     | : | eight 5·9" |            |           |

*Kaiser Karl VI*      two 9·4"      20 knots.  
*Aspern* . . .      eight 4·7".      17 knots.  
*Novara* . . .      eight 3·9".      27 knots.  
*Helgoland* . . .      eight 3·9".      27 knots.  
 Five destroyers of the "Czepel" class; two 3·9"; 33 knots.  
 Two destroyers of the "Hussar" class; six 11-pdrs.; 28 knots.  
 Eight torpedo boats.

Allied forces in Brindisi—

## ITALIAN—

|                          |           |             |
|--------------------------|-----------|-------------|
| <i>Vittorio Emanuele</i> | two 12"   | } 20 knots. |
| <i>Regina Elena</i>      | twelve 8" |             |

*Roma* . . .      six 4·7".      26 knots.  
*Nino Bixio* . . .      six 4·7".      26 knots.  
*Quarto* . . .      twelve 14-pdr.      22 knots.  
*Agordat* . . .      three armed merchant cruisers.  
 Mining vessels.  
 Nine destroyers (four "Abba," five "Indomito").  
 Five submarines.

## FRENCH—

Nine destroyers (five "Casque," two "Bouclier," two "Spahi").  
 Nine submarines.

## BRITISH—

|                        |                 |           |
|------------------------|-----------------|-----------|
| <i>Weymouth</i> . . .  | eight 6".       | 26 knots. |
| <i>Dartmouth</i> . . . | two 6"; ten 4". | 26 knots. |
| <i>Liverpool</i> . . . | twelve 4".      | 22 knots. |

Four submarines.

as the duty of supplying the Serbian army from Durazzo fell, almost entirely, upon him, some of his cruisers were generally away on escort duty.

Durazzo Bay, where a large part of the Serbian army was afterwards assembled, was protected by a minefield, and the surrounding hills were posted with Italian troops and batteries, some of which covered the seaward approaches of the bay. The protection afforded was not, however, absolute; Durazzo lies only eighty miles from the mouth of Cattaro Bay and was certainly within reach of a raiding attack.<sup>1</sup>

The intelligence system of the Italian High Command sufficed to detect any movement that was actually on foot, and it was supplemented by reports from submarine patrols. But at the end of December, the number of submarines capable of going on patrol appears to have been small; there were no British submarines of the Brindisi force ready for service. The French submarines *Archimède* and *Monge* were keeping watch to the north and south of Cattaro respectively. On the 28th the *Archimède* torpedoed and sank a large Austrian steamer approaching Cattaro from the north.<sup>2</sup>

At 9.0 p.m. on December 28 Captain Seitz, the commanding officer of the *Helgoland*, received orders to raid Durazzo. He was to take with him the destroyers *Czepel*, *Tatra*, *Triglav*, *Lika*, and *Balaton*, and was to be off the bay by daybreak. If, when he got there, no Italian destroyers were found on patrol, he was to go inside at once and sink all the transports he could find.

By midnight the whole force was under way, and when clear of the harbour the destroyers took up their cruising formation: the *Balaton* astern of the *Helgoland*, the *Czepel* and the *Tatra* to starboard, and the *Lika* and *Triglav* to port. The night was clear, with very little wind, and soon after 2.30 a submarine's periscope was sighted in the *Helgoland*'s wake, just ahead of the *Balaton*. It was the *Monge*. She had no chance of saving herself from the *Balaton*, which immediately rammed and sank her, and, an hour later, the raiders were again on their course with two officers and twenty-five men prisoners on board.

At 6.0 a.m. on the morning of the 29th the force was fifteen miles to the westward of Durazzo, and after making a short sweep to the south-westward to make sure that there was no sign of interference by Allied forces approaching from Brindisi, the raiders turned in towards the bay. They hoped to find

<sup>1</sup> See Map 5.

<sup>2</sup> It has not been possible to ascertain the movements of the Italian submarines.

a small force of Italian destroyers still inside, and the *Helgoland* and *Balaton* therefore steamed towards Cape Laghi at the southern end of the bay to cut off any ships that might attempt to escape.<sup>1</sup> It was soon evident, however, that there were only three unarmed ships inside—a steamer and two small sailing vessels—and at 7.30 the whole force steamed in, with the exception of the *Balaton*, which remained outside watching for submarines.

The Italian ships in the bay were sunk after twenty minutes' firing. To carry out the attack, the destroyers had gone right in, but the *Helgoland* kept outside the imaginary line joining the buoys at the northern and southern ends of the bay, and steamed slowly to and fro to the south-westward of Durazzo. At about eight o'clock the destroyers came up to the northern end to join her. As they did so the batteries on shore opened on them, and the destroyers turned sharply to port so as to keep out of the *Helgoland's* line of fire. Their new course brought them into a minefield. The *Lika* almost immediately struck two mines in quick succession: the second explosion started a fire, and she sank, burning fiercely.<sup>2</sup> The *Tatra* saved as many survivors as she was able to pick up—it was impossible for her to go alongside the *Lika* on account of the flames—but, almost simultaneously with the first disaster, the *Triglav* also struck a mine abreast her boiler-room. These rapid and unexpected casualties placed the flotilla in a very anxious position.

The *Triglav*, it is true, remained afloat, and the *Czepel* was ordered to tow her out, but the towing cable got foul of the *Czepel's* screw, and Captain Seitz then ordered the *Tatra* to relieve her. All this took time, and in the meanwhile the guns ashore were getting the range. The *Helgoland* made every possible effort to engage the batteries and cover the operations, but it was not until 9.50 a.m. that the crippled flotilla moved out. The *Triglav* was entirely out of action, the *Tatra* was incapable of fighting so long as she kept the tow, and the *Czepel's* speed was much reduced by the portion of tow rope which still fouled her propeller.

Moreover, serious as was the difficulty of getting the *Triglav* safely back to harbour, a much heavier anxiety was now weighing upon the senior officer's mind. At 8.15 he had intercepted a signal from the Italian commander on shore reporting the raid to Vice-Admiral Cutinelli at Brindisi.<sup>3</sup> He knew, therefore, that our squadrons in Brindisi would

<sup>1</sup> *Marine Rundschau*, June 1922, p. 243.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 243-4.

<sup>3</sup> This was probably a repetition; Brindisi seems to have had the news a good deal earlier.

be on the move, and at 10.10 he sent a telegram to the Austrian Admiral in Cattaro warning him of the dangerous position of the flotilla. "The *Lika* and the *Triglav* have struck mines off Durazzo. The *Lika* has sunk. *Triglav* in tow, but making water. Durazzo has warned Brindisi; it is therefore possible that we shall be cut off." His estimate was correct, for our counter-movement was by then well advanced.

Shortly after seven o'clock an Italian officer came on board the *Dartmouth*. He informed Captain Addison that a force of Austrian destroyers was off Valona, and gave him an order from Admiral Cutinelli to proceed to sea with the Italian light cruiser *Quarto* and five French destroyers and cut them off. The *Dartmouth* and *Quarto* had steam up, but the French destroyers, the *Casque*, *Renaudin*, *Commandant Bory*, *Bisson*, and *Commandant Lucas*, were not quite ready. Captain Addison decided not to wait for them and got under way at once; but he gave them verbal orders to follow as soon as they could, and to meet him off Cattaro, for he determined to get between the raiding force and their base, as the only certain method of finding and engaging them. Just before the *Dartmouth* got under way, an Italian officer came on board and told Captain Addison that Durazzo, not Valona, had been bombarded. By eight o'clock the *Dartmouth* and *Quarto* were clear of the harbour. The *Casque* and the other French destroyers followed soon after.

At 7.45 Admiral Cutinelli sent a message to the *Weymouth* ordering her to raise steam at once, as an Austrian force of "cruisers and destroyers" was raiding Durazzo. As soon as he could do so, Captain D. B. Crampton went on board the *Vittorio Emanuele*—Admiral Cutinelli's flagship—and begged to be allowed to proceed. For the moment, the Italian Admiral was inclined to wait for more news, but shortly after nine he received a further signal to the effect that the Austrians were still off the town. This seems to have given him the confirmation that he required, for he at once instructed Rear-Admiral Belleni to hoist his flag in the *Nino Bixio* and proceed to sea with the *Weymouth* and the four destroyers, *Abba*, *Nievo*, *Mosto*, and *Pilo*, in order to reinforce the *Dartmouth* and bring the enemy to action if he could. At 10.10, therefore, when the captain of the *Helgoland* informed the Austrian Admiral at Cattaro that the flotilla was in danger, the *Dartmouth* and the *Quarto* were about fifty-five miles to the westward of him, steering for Cattaro, the French destroyers were following on the *Dartmouth*'s track, and Admiral Belleni's force was about twelve miles to the north of Brindisi, also steering northwards for Cattaro.

So long as the *Triglav* was kept in tow the raiding flotilla could only proceed at 6 knots. The captain of the *Helgoland* made an effort to get on more quickly by ordering the *Balaton* to assist the *Tatra* in towing the *Triglav*, but the experiment failed, and the *Tatra* kept the tow. At Cattaro the *Kaiser Karl VI* was being kept under steam, and at 10.35 the captain of the *Helgoland* asked that she might be sent out in support. She was at once ordered to weigh, and passed the harbour entrance at about 11.30, accompanied by four torpedo boats (Nos. 70, 17, 81, and 80). The position that now arose was one of peculiar uncertainty. We had at sea four light cruisers and two destroyer flotillas chasing a weaker force. But the *Kaiser Karl VI* was far more powerful than anything we could oppose to her (unless Admiral Cutinelli put to sea with his heavier ships); so that, if the Austrian forces succeeded in joining up, the *Dartmouth* and Admiral Belleni's squadron might at any moment be in great danger. The Italian Admiral knew, fairly accurately, what forces the Austrians had concentrated in Cattaro; he learned by one o'clock that the *Kaiser Karl VI* and *Novara* were at sea, and, apart from this information (which was gained from the enemy's intercepted signals), it was not difficult to foretell that the Austrians would make every effort to extricate the crippled flotilla. He, therefore, informed the captain of the *Dartmouth* that Admiral Belleni was coming out to support him, and later he warned the Rear-Admiral that the *Kaiser Karl VI* and the *Novara* were out.

Captain Addison's force was the first to come into contact with the Austrians. Adhering to his intention to cut the raiders off from their base, he kept on his course for Cattaro; but at about noon he received two messages from Admiral Cutinelli in Brindisi telling him that the raiders had lost two destroyers at Durazzo, and had left the bay at 10.30 a.m. with one boat in tow.<sup>1</sup> Although the information was not correct in every particular, it sufficed to show Captain Addison that the raiders were to the south of him. He therefore turned north-eastwards towards the land, so as to make sure that the enemy should not escape him by hugging the coast, and, after holding his new course for twenty-five minutes, turned southwards in the direction of Cape Rodoni. At 12.38 the *Dartmouth* and *Quarto* were joined by the French destroyers, and at 12.55, while they were still making towards Cape Rodoni, Captain Addison sighted the smoke of the *Nino*

<sup>1</sup> The messages were received at 10.50 and 11.20, but owing to the time necessary for deciphering them they were not in Captain Addison's hands until nearly noon.

*Bixio* and *Weymouth* on his starboard beam. Admiral Belleni was, in fact, following Captain Addison's original plan, and making towards Cattaro, but, unfortunately, the messages from Brindisi about the crippled state of the Austrian flotilla did not induce him to turn at once, like Captain Addison, to the eastward. If he had done this his squadron would have come into action at least two hours earlier than it actually did. At 11.0 he sent on the *Abba* and *Nievo* to reconnoitre, and held on his course until he heard from Admiral Cutinelli that the *Kaiser Karl VI* and *Novara* were out; then he turned sharply to the eastward, and twenty minutes later altered course to the southwards, for his destroyers had warned him that they had sighted the *Kaiser Karl VI* further north, and that aeroplanes were in sight to the north-east.<sup>1</sup> Realising that the presence of this heavily gunned cruiser made his position difficult, he recalled his destroyers (1.45), and made towards the *Dartmouth*, which was just coming into action with the enemy.<sup>2</sup>

Captain Addison had ordered the five French destroyers as they came up to take station on his port beam. At about 1.20 he sighted two smoke clouds, one ahead and one just on the starboard bow. The first came from the *Helgoland*, with the *Balaton* and *Czepel* in company; the second from the *Tatra* towing the *Triglav*. Either because the light to the northward was clearer, or because his own ships could not be seen so easily against the land, the Austrian commander had become aware of our presence before we had sighted him. When he did so, he must have thought he had little chance of getting back alive. The *Czepel* had been unable to clear the towing rope from her propeller and could only do 20 knots, so that even if the *Triglav* were abandoned, the whole flotilla would be at least 5 knots slower than any one of the pursuing cruisers. Captain Seitz was by then aware that the *Kaiser Karl VI* was coming to his assistance, and he probably guessed that the *Aspern*, *Budapest* and *Novara* would follow as soon as they could. This knowledge of what was being done to save him must have sharpened his disappointment when he sighted our cruisers and realised that they had got between him and his supporting forces.

Captain Seitz would doubtless have been justified had he decided to abandon the *Czepel*, whose slow speed was endangering the entire flotilla. No such thought seems to have

<sup>1</sup> They actually reported a "cruiser of the 'Sankt Georg' type," and, although no mention was made in their signal to Admiral Belleni, the aeroplanes vigorously attacked the *Abba* and *Nievo*.

<sup>2</sup> See Map 6.

crossed his mind, however, for at 12.10 he sent out his final orders, which show that he intended to stand by her to the last. "If the enemy cruisers advance against us the *Triglav* is to be sunk. The *Tatra* and the *Balaton* are then to close the *Helgoland*, which will endeavour to attract the enemy's attack to herself, and so give the *Czepel* a chance of getting away on the disengaged side. The *Triglav* is to be made ready for sinking. Documents, money, and crew are to be placed on board the *Balaton*."

He then continued on his northerly course, and at 12.50 had the good fortune to speak to *U 15*, which was patrolling in the neighbourhood. Realising that he would soon be in action, he told the submarine commander to stand by the *Triglav*, which would certainly attract our light cruisers, and so give him an opportunity of delivering a successful attack. A quarter of an hour later, the *Czepel* and *Balaton* reported the *Dartmouth* and *Quarto*, and orders were given to sink the *Triglav*.<sup>1</sup> Standing stiffly to his determination to save the destroyers if he could, Captain Seitz steered straight for us, so as to cover the damaged *Czepel*, and at 1.30, when all hope of joining the *Kaiser Karl VI* was gone, turned to the westward.

As soon as Captain Addison had made out the *Tatra* with the *Triglav* in tow, he detached the *Casque* and her destroyers to deal with them (1.38). The enemy were thirteen miles away when the order was given, and, by the time the French boats reached the spot, the *Triglav* had been sunk and the *Tatra* had rejoined the *Helgoland*. The senior officer of the French flotilla reported this to Captain Addison some time later (2.12), and followed the *Dartmouth* and *Quarto* to the westward. The French boats were several knots slower than our light cruisers, and were not engaged during the afternoon.

The enemy was by now (1.30 to 1.35) well settled on his westerly course. The *Czepel* had first tried to escape to the eastward, but seeing that it was quite impossible to get past us and the French flotillas, turned to follow the *Helgoland*. At 1.35 Captain Addison steered south, so as not to let the enemy draw too far ahead; seven minutes later he made a

<sup>1</sup> It seems as though it took some time to carry out this order. The entries in the *Dartmouth's* log between 1.0 and 1.43 p.m. are as follows:— "1.18, sighted smoke S. 30 E.; 1.22, more smoke 1 point on starboard bow; 1.30, portion of smoke observed to separate and cross to port, apparently one T.B.D. towing another. Remainder identified as *Novara* and 2 T.B.D. Increased full speed; 1.35, S. 5 W.; 1.40, T.B.D. slipped tow and proceeded to endeavour to join remainder of enemy's squadron; 1.42, Co. S. 25 W.; 1.43, opened fire."

further turn to starboard, and almost simultaneously opened fire at a range of about 14,000 yards. By then, the *Helgoland* was steering to the south-south-west, as it must soon have become clear to Captain Seitz that he would get to a dangerously short range if he attempted to hold his westerly course and cross the *Dartmouth's* bow.

When the action began, Admiral Belleni was about fifteen miles to the north-north-westward of the *Dartmouth* and *Quarto*, the *Kaiser Karl VI* to the north-eastward, several miles out of range, and the *Aspern*, *Budapest* and *Novara* were just getting under way. Captain Addison had, therefore, definitely placed himself between the *Helgoland* and her supporters, but it was still possible that he might be cut off from Admiral Belleni. The danger of this was, however, diminishing, as Captain Addison had informed the Rear-Admiral in the *Nino Bixio* at 1.30 that the enemy had turned to a westerly course, an intimation which would deter him from making too far to the north and east.

It was clear to Captain Addison that Admiral Belleni could not arrive for some time, and he soon discovered that the enemy had the heels of him.<sup>1</sup> He therefore decided to use his intercepting position to drive the enemy south-westwards towards Brindisi, where he hoped that Admiral Cutinelli would be waiting for them. It would be a long time before the enemy could work round his bows, and so long as he kept the *Dartmouth* to the north, the enemy's advantage in speed would be countered, and, at the same time, his efforts to break north would keep him within range of the *Dartmouth's* 6-inch guns.

When Captain Seitz settled the *Helgoland* on a south-westerly course at 1.34, he was fully alive to the *Dartmouth's* advantages, which were not in her position alone, but in her choice of range, for the *Helgoland's* guns could not fire effectively at more than 10,000 yards. Between 1.40 and two o'clock the converging courses of the two squadrons reduced the range fairly rapidly, and at 1.55 the *Helgoland* was hit.<sup>2</sup> Throughout the afternoon the Austrian gunlayers endeavoured to return an effective fire by aiming at our mastheads with the sights set at extreme range, but the device was not successful, and from first to last Captain Seitz's only chance of escape was in the speed of his squadron.

At two o'clock the *Helgoland* was turned to a course due

<sup>1</sup> In his report, the captain of the *Helgoland* states that his ship was worked up to a speed of 29 knots through the water.

<sup>2</sup> The hit was at the fore davit of the starboard lifeboat, and caused eight casualties (one killed, seven wounded).

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south, in order to open out the range, but Captain Seitz brought her back to her south-westerly course a few minutes later, and renewed his effort to get round the *Dartmouth's* bows. The *Helgoland* was not hit again for nearly two hours, during which time the courses varied between south-west and west-south-west, with the *Helgoland* slowly drawing ahead. In the meantime, Captain Accini in the *Quarto* was causing the Austrian commander the greatest anxiety. He had manoeuvred his vessel into the *Helgoland's* wake, and it seemed as though the *Czepel* would be cut off in spite of all the efforts that had been made to save her. What followed is a fair example of how one of the two adversaries in an action may mistake the other's intentions. Captain Accini had apparently moved out to attack the lagging destroyers on his own initiative, and at about 2.10, Captain Addison directed him to take station on the *Dartmouth's* port quarter. As Captain Accini put his helm over to obey the order the *Helgoland* fired a torpedo, and Captain Seitz thought the aim had been so good that the *Quarto* had moved out of the way to avoid the torpedo. In point of fact, no one on board the *Quarto* realised that there had been anything to avoid.

Between 2.30 and 3.15 the *Quarto*, acting under orders from Captain Addison, again endeavoured to cut off the *Czepel*, but by now the opportunity had passed, and the movement was not noticed in the *Helgoland*.<sup>1</sup>

In spite of the difficulties of firing with 6-inch guns, at ranges up to 13,000 yards, on a target which was frequently covered by smoke, the *Dartmouth's* shooting was extremely accurate. At 2.30 the *Helgoland* was straddled; but she succeeded in throwing out the range by turning away, and the *Dartmouth* ceased fire to avoid wasting ammunition. For the next twenty minutes (2.40 to 3.0) Captain Addison turned his ship gradually to port, and the distance between the *Dartmouth* and the *Helgoland* shortly decreased. The *Dartmouth* kept up an intermittent fire from her broadsides, to test the range, and at 3.2 the *Helgoland* was hit by two shells from these experimental salvos. Just after 3.0 the range slowly opened out again, as the Austrian squadron then established their lead, and the enemy's chances of

<sup>1</sup> Captain Seitz speaks of the *Quarto's* turn towards the *Dartmouth* at 2.10 in terms of great relief, but he makes no mention of the second deliberate attempt to intercept the *Czepel*. His war diary runs as follows: "2.10. The direction of the torpedo is good: *Quarto* makes a large turn to port (sic): simultaneously *Czepel* is extricated: *Helgoland* is cleared for two hours."

It should be noted that, although the *Czepel* reported at about noon that she could only do 20 knots, she must have far exceeded that speed during the whole afternoon.

getting away improved. At 3.15 the *Helgoland* had got well ahead, and Captain Seitz began edging to the westward.<sup>1</sup> He made several more turns to starboard; but at 3.30 he sighted Admiral Belleni's approaching ships and realised that his chances of escaping were lessening again. For some time past the Rear-Admiral had been seen approaching from the *Dartmouth*; but the smoke of the destroyers obscured the view to the eastward of the *Helgoland*; by the time Captain Seitz became aware of Admiral Belleni's approach the fresh ships were nearly within range.

Admiral Belleni's squadron was in a somewhat irregular order. At 2.5 Captain Crampton had asked for permission to close the *Dartmouth*. It had been granted, with the result that the *Weymouth* had edged considerably to the southward, and when the new squadron came into action she was on the *Nino Bixio*'s port quarter. To port of the *Weymouth* were the destroyers *Mosto* and *Pilo*. The other two destroyers, *Abba* and *Nievo*, were on the disengaged side of the *Nino Bixio*. As he overhauled the *Helgoland*, Captain Crampton sighted the *Czepel* some distance to the southward, and asked permission to send the *Mosto* and *Pilo* to cut her off (3.30). The request was granted (3.40), and the two destroyers began to manoeuvre towards the *Helgoland*'s wake.

At 3.50, when the *Weymouth* opened fire, at the extreme range on the sights, the *Helgoland* had a slight lead on the newcomers; but she was now outnumbered by four to one—without counting the destroyers; and the *Czepel* had only to lose a knot or two to be cut off by the *Quarto*, which was following in a position wide of the *Dartmouth*'s beam.<sup>2</sup>

Here once more the Austrian commander was in a position of great danger. At 3.40 he had turned to a north-westerly course in the hope of breaking through; but the attempt soon proved impossible, as the new course took him right across the track of the *Weymouth* and the *Nino Bixio*, and rapidly reduced his lead on the *Dartmouth*. Indeed, in a few minutes the range had fallen so much that the Austrian destroyers were bringing their guns into action against the *Dartmouth*, and Captain Seitz saw that it was no longer possible to get away to the westward. He therefore turned sharply to the south (4.0), "in order to gain time until sunset"; but this move increased his difficulties. It put him on a course at right angles to his original pursuers, the

<sup>1</sup> Not shown on the plan, as the *Helgoland*'s position at 3.15 can only be conjectured.

<sup>2</sup> She had been ordered to cut off the *Czepel* at 2.30, and recalled at 3.15, but she does not appear to have obeyed the recall.

*Dartmouth* and *Quarto*, and although the *Dartmouth* conformed and took up a parallel course, the *Quarto* held straight on and overhauled the *Helgoland* rapidly. Taking this as a threat to separate him from the *Czepel*, which he had risked so much to defend, the Austrian commander turned to starboard again and steered to the south-west (4.7). Again the *Dartmouth* conformed, and kept up the intermittent firing which had continued since the fight began.

The difficulties in the way of accurate shooting were at the time great, as the Austrian destroyers were sending up a very heavy smoke-screen; and the colours at the *Helgoland's* masthead were often the only part of the ship still visible. Our fire was, none the less, extremely accurate when it was possible to fire at all, and at 4.25 the *Helgoland* was hit by a shell which entered the top of her third funnel: two fires in two boilers were put out, and one boiler was damaged. "We were now pursued by four cruisers," says Captain Seitz in his war diary; "it was the hardest moment of the fight."

As a matter of fact, however, the *Helgoland's* chances of escape were at this moment improving. She was again steadily increasing her lead, and at about 4.30 the *Czepel* rejoined her.<sup>1</sup> As she did so our firing increased in intensity; for the sun had now set, and the Austrian ships were clearly outlined against the evening sky.

It is possible that Captain Seitz's view of our ships had been obscured by smoke, and that, in the confusion and uncertainty of the action, he had thought his position worse than it really was; for only five minutes after the situation had seemed so black, he realised, as he looked down the range, which was clear for the first time since the fight began, that he had a good chance of escaping to the north-westward. He did not immediately make the attempt; but held on his south-westerly course for another twenty minutes, and at 4.50 turned to a course parallel to the Italian coast, which was by this time only twelve miles away. The moment was well chosen, for the *Dartmouth* and *Quarto* were then well astern of him; and, in the failing light, he had at least a good chance of getting past Admiral Belleni without being disabled. His south-westward course since 4.7 had carried him out of range of the *Nino Bixio*; for the Rear-Admiral had kept on a more westerly course, in the hope of cutting off the enemy's retreat during his swerve to the southward. Captain Seitz's new movement towards Monte Gargano peninsula now put the two opposing flagships on to rapidly converging

<sup>1</sup> It was at about this time that she was hit in the fore topmast; the shell wrecked the crows' nest.

courses. If it had been made earlier in the day it would have meant certain destruction for the *Helgoland*; but dusk was now gathering, and Captain Seitz decided to take the risk.

The *Helgoland* was soon within range of our guns, and the *Weymouth* and *Nino Bixio* opened on her with salvoes. Difficult as the conditions were, our shells fell accurately; and one of them hit the *Helgoland* on her armour. But as she had the good fortune to suffer no damage, the *Helgoland* was able to maintain her speed during the critical moments when she most needed it; and at five o'clock Captain Seitz signalled to the *Budapest* squadron, which had put to sea during the afternoon and joined up with the *Kaiser Karl VI*, that he was trying to break through in the direction of Monte Gargano.

His position continued for some time to be most critical, for the range between him and Admiral Belleni's ships was rapidly decreasing; and a lucky shot would have put him at our mercy. A few minutes later his danger broke full upon him: the *Weymouth* and *Nino Bixio* opened a concentrated fire upon the Austrian ships as they stood out against the last glow of the twilight, and our salvoes fell all round the target. But Captain Seitz held on without swerving, and a few minutes later his courage and good leadership were rewarded; for our fire began to slacken as gunlaying and range-finding became mere guesswork in the growing darkness.

Our last chance of preventing the enemy from getting home was now centred in the *Moslo* and *Pilo*—the two destroyers on the *Weymouth*'s port beam—and at about 5.2 they made a final effort to get within torpedo range.<sup>1</sup> As they approached, however, it was clear that they could not get into position without coming under the fire of our ships, and the attempt was abandoned.

At 5.30 the range had dropped to 7,000 yards; the *Nino Bixio* was slightly hit; and in the obscurity Admiral Belleni thought he detected the enemy turning to the northward. He put his helm over to conform; but Captain Crampton, who was nearer, and saw no change of course, held on as he was; and so got between the *Nino Bixio* and the enemy. Admiral Belleni at once ceased fire; but the *Weymouth* continued to send down salvoes until 5.50, when she, too, stopped. At six o'clock, when the Captain of the *Helgoland* saw that he had all his pursuers abaft the beam, he turned north, and was soon lost to view, for it was by then quite dark.

<sup>1</sup> They had been manoeuvring for position ever since 3.40, when Captain Addison ordered them to cut off the *Czepel*.

*The Evacuation of the Serbian Army (continued)*

Admiral Pini's committee had met on December 24. At this sitting the Italian members and the president again urged the need for moving the Serbian army from round Scutari further to the south. Despite Admiral Troubridge's efforts, the confusion at San Giovanni di Medua was terrible. The enemy's submarines were threatening; as far as could be ascertained, there was one continually at work off the Bojana River. The Italian members were, moreover, deeply irritated by the criticism which was being levelled against them by persons who were quite unable to see the difficulty of landing supplies at an open roadstead, where there was a total lack of facilities for receiving them. No decisions were taken, and the committee, after meeting again on January 4, asked Commander Larking to cross over to Albania and report on the local conditions.

In the meantime, matters in Albania were moving towards a crisis. The Serbian army round Scutari refused to stir; and on December 31 General Mondésir arrived from France to take charge, as the Allies had decided that it should be the allotted duty of the French to re-equip and reorganise the Serbian troops. Disregarding the dangers of transporting an army from an open roadstead within reach of the enemy's raiding forces, and anxious only to remove the Serbs to some place where he might again bring them under military training, General Mondésir urged that the embarkation should be pressed forward. His intention was to embark 88,000 men at San Giovanni di Medua, 45,000 at Durazzo and the remaining 10,000 at Valona, and that they should all be conveyed to Tunis. But his proposal only strengthened the Serbian opposition; and it was due to Admiral Troubridge that the matter was settled without a violent quarrel. This officer's influence with the Serbian generals was very great. From the moment when he arrived on the Danube he had won their affection and respect. Throughout the retreat his proud military bearing and the self-control of his officers had been noticed by everybody. The Serbian authorities were very bitter about the Allies; but their affection for the British Admiral had never wavered, and when they arrived at the coast one of their first acts had been to give him authority over their own soldiers and fellow-countrymen. But for this Admiral Troubridge's position would have been impossible; as matters stood, it was still extremely difficult.

His naval instinct told him that San Giovanni di Medua was no place from which to embark an army; but he was well aware how strongly the Serbians disliked the idea of being marched south to Valona. On the other hand, he had no wish to obstruct or oppose the French General. He decided that no personal feeling ought to prevent him from giving his advice as clearly and candidly as possible; and when General Mondésir forwarded him a plan for embarking 2,000 troops a day, he at once stated his objections :

“ As soon as I learned that I was responsible (for embarking the Serbian army) I considered it my duty to tell the Serbian Headquarters Staff that it is neither reasonable nor practicable to embark 88,000 men at Medua.

“ The first desideratum for such an operation is to find a suitable harbour as far as possible from the enemy.

“ Medua is the least suitable harbour, and is the nearest to the enemy of those available. . . .

“ If the soldiers come here, I shall assist them as far as I can; but I have told the Serbian Headquarters that I cannot bear responsibility for what may occur.

“ With the greatest respect, I am of the opinion that the operation has been badly conceived and will end badly.”

The letter was a very happy combination of bluntness and tact. With a Frenchman’s quickness of apprehension, General Mondésir realised that such plain speaking must certainly be honest, and that Admiral Troubridge’s objections were obviously sound. The Serbian Headquarters Staff knew how loyally the unpalatable advice had been given, and at once replied through Colonel Pavlovitch :

“ To my sorrow it has come to my ears that you have been thinking we should act differently. . . . We consider you our greatest friend, and we are happy to have so competent and illustrious an officer for our naval affairs. We shall always address ourselves to you, and your advice will be held most precious.”

The Serbians were as good as their word, and on January 7, 16,000 men marched off to Durazzo. The destination of the Serbian army was at the same time changed from Tunis to Corfu. This port was now occupied by a French naval detachment, who prepared it for the reception of the Serbian troops.

The wisdom of clearing northern Albania was soon evident. On the very next day, a telegram came in to say that the Montenegrin army was being attacked over its whole front. Details of the position and extent of the Montenegrin lines are lacking; but it would seem that most of the country was at this time in the hands of the Austro-Germans, and that the Montenegrin forces were covering Cettinje from a defensive position between the northern end of the lake of Scutari and Mount Lowcen. To the north and north-east of this principal position, the mountain chain of Kuk and the town of Podgorica seem to have been held in strength. As the Serbian troops could no longer be treated as a field army, the Montenegrin lines were the last barrier between northern Albania and the advancing Austro-Germans.

It was now clear that the barrier would not stand. On the day after the assault began, the Italians were informed that one position after another was falling; and on January 11 it was known that the occupation of Cettinje was imminent. On the following day the Montenegrins asked for an armistice. It was granted them; and they were disarmed and disbanded by the Austrian Staff.

The resulting position was serious for more reasons than one. San Giovanni di Medua would certainly be occupied; but this was not all. Mount Lowcen overlooks the harbour of Cattaro; it had thus been used as an observing station for the movements of the Austrian light cruisers, and had been linked up with Medua by a chain of look-out and wireless stations. All these were now being withdrawn, and the difficulties of opposing the Austrian light cruiser raids increased in proportion.

It was now decided to evacuate San Giovanni di Medua completely and at once.<sup>1</sup> The Serbs marched south as fast as the state of the Durazzo road would allow; those who could be transported by sea more quickly were pressed on board the available steamers; and by January 22, the work was done. All the artillery, stores and wagons were removed, and the harbour was left empty. On January 29 the Austrians occupied the town.

Durazzo now became the centre of the evacuation. From this port the troops were carried either direct to Corfu, or sent in small vessels to Valona and then transhipped into large transports for the rest of the passage. The work was not absolutely completed until early in April; but the bulk

<sup>1</sup> The French were now in complete charge of the arrangements, and, as Admiral Troubridge's services were no longer required, he proceeded to Taranto on January 20, and was shortly afterwards recalled home.

of the Serbian forces, amounting to about 134,000 officers and men, with 36,350 horses and transport oxen, were removed during February. To carry out the operation 203,000 tons of shipping had been employed, and the vessels had made in all 322 voyages. The naval effort upon which this movement rested had been very heavy; 1,159 cruiser sweeps and convoy trips were carried out by the Allied vessels. In each case the Italian contribution had been from a half to two-thirds of the total. It may be said with confidence, that if the Austrian High Naval Command had been as energetic as the Allied, the work of embarking the Serbian army from Durazzo would have been a good deal more difficult than it was. The Austrian navy as a whole made no move; interference with the embarkations and convoys was left to the submarines and the indefatigable Captain Seitz. From first to last the operation cost the Allies eleven light craft (destroyers and auxiliaries) and eight steamers; whilst the attacks upon our bases and lines of communication cost the Austrians two destroyers and two aeroplanes.

By February 6 Captain Seitz, having repaired his ship, was again at sea in the *Helgoland*, with six torpedo boats (Nos. 83, 87, 88, 74, 78 and 80) in company. A powerful column of Austrian troops was then marching southwards on Durazzo. As the Italians only intended to hold the place as long as they needed it for their immediate purpose, the approach of the enemy compelled them to press on with their embarkations. Captain Seitz, on the other hand, moved towards the threatened harbour and its congested traffic, hoping to arrive in time to attack a large convoy which, according to his information, was due to leave Durazzo early in the morning. Simultaneously with the blow he hoped to strike, a destroyer, the *Wildfang*, with two seaplanes, was to operate close inshore in conjunction with a line of submarines. The times at which these two groups sailed and the course they took are a matter of conjecture; all that can be said with certainty is that they were both at sea during the afternoon of February 7. Two of our light cruisers were patrolling near the transport route. The *Liverpool* had left Brindisi at 1.0 p.m. on the previous day, with the Italian destroyer *Bronzetti* in company, with orders to protect the coastwise traffic between Valona Bay and Durazzo; the *Weymouth*, with the French destroyer *Bouchier*, left Brindisi at eleven o'clock in the forenoon of the 6th. The Italian destroyers *Abba* and *Ardente* with the torpedo boats *Airone* and *Ardea* were on guard at Durazzo itself.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Camillo Manfroni: *Storia della Marina Italiana*, p. 97.

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At about 2.0 p.m., the *Liverpool* and *Bronzetti*, which were then steering for Brindisi, sighted a hostile aeroplane. They were, at the time, about forty-five miles S. 6° E. (true) from Cattaro. The aircraft turned sharply to the northward, and Captain G. W. Vivian, realising that she might be the herald of something more serious, followed her. A few minutes later smoke was sighted towards Cattaro, and the *Bronzetti* was ordered ahead to investigate. The *Weymouth* was about twenty-five miles to the south-eastward. Captain Crampton got a signal from his colleague that "an enemy ship was in sight" (2.25 p.m.), and at once turned northwards to support him. What had happened was that the *Liverpool* and the *Bronzetti* had fallen in with the *Wildfang* and had turned her back.

The *Liverpool* was naturally outpaced; but the captain of the *Bronzetti*, Commander Grixoni, pressed ahead, and at 3.0 p.m. opened fire. The *Wildfang* returned it; but the range was still too great and the salvos fell short. Captain Vivian soon saw that the chase was carrying the *Bronzetti* dangerously close to the batteries in Traste Bay and recalled her. Commander Grixoni was actually under fire from the shore when he turned back. The *Wildfang* anchored in Traste Bay, and the *Weymouth* and *Bronzetti* resumed their course for Brindisi. At 3.20 Captain Crampton in the *Weymouth* got a signal that the enemy to the north of him had got back to Cattaro, and he thereupon resumed his patrol. Though they did not know it, Captain Vivian and his Italian colleague had thrown out the first movement of a serious attack upon the transport line.

The *Liverpool* and *Bronzetti* were back in Brindisi towards nightfall, and the *Weymouth* and *Bouclier* continued the patrol. At about 7.30, a group of destroyers was sighted ahead. Our cruisers were then about thirty-five miles to the southward of Cattaro, on a course towards Cape Rodoni. Three hostile boats were distinctly made out, and a fourth was reported; the enemy were steering south across Captain Crampton's bows. He also turned southwards to bring them on his beam and so get his broadside to bear. It was getting dusk; but the weather was fine and clear, and the *Weymouth* opened a slow and deliberate fire at a range of 7,000 yards. For a time the Austrians held on resolutely and closed the range. Just before eight o'clock, the two groups were within 5,000 yards, and Captain Crampton altered away slightly and increased his speed. Soon after 8.0 p.m. it was seen that the enemy group had turned north. Captain Crampton at once turned after them; but ceased fire, for it

was growing dark. The Austrian destroyers were now making for Cattaro, and we continued to dog them until nine o'clock, when they were no longer visible. Whether these two successive encounters were the only causes which upset Captain Seitz's plans we cannot say with certainty : we must be content to record that, on the night of February 6-7, there was no organised attack on the transport route, though everything combines to show that something serious was attempted.<sup>1</sup>

By February 9, the Serbian troops round Durazzo had been transported ; the Italians then had a force of 8,500 men and 36 guns posted on the hills round the town, under the command of General Ferrero. The Italian Staff had always intended to withdraw this garrison as soon as it was no longer needed for covering the Serbians ; but in consequence of the breakdown of the Montenegrin fronts and the southern advance of the Austrian armies, the withdrawal now had to be carried out in the presence of the enemy. On or about the 10th the Austrian forces began to approach the Italian positions ; but it was not until nearly a fortnight later that they had assembled in any considerable force or had brought up their artillery. For some reason or another the Italian army authorities still delayed the evacuation. On February 15 General Ferrero reported that he was ready. The naval commander at Brindisi, Admiral Cutinelli, at once sent over fifteen transports and two hospital ships with a sufficient escort ; but, almost as soon as they assembled in Durazzo, General Ferrero countermanded the evacuation. It was not attempted again until the 25th, and during the interval the enemy pressure had very much increased. The withdrawal was at last carried out on the nights of February 25, 26, and 27 in very adverse circumstances. Since the 23rd the enemy had encircled the Italian positions, and kept them under a continuous bombardment ; on the 24th the Austrians seized the Sasso Bianco (white cliffs) and kept the beaches under fire.

The naval part of the business in hand was, therefore, very arduous. It was extraordinarily difficult to keep down the fire of the enemy's batteries, and harder still to get the troops embarked. A very large force had to be allotted to the operation : fourteen transports and a hospital ship were concentrated in the bay ; a group of British drifters under Lieutenant-Commander M. E. Cochrane netted the harbour

<sup>1</sup> At 7.0 a.m. on the following morning the *Weymouth* and *Bouclier*, when about fifteen miles to the west-north-westward of Durazzo, were attacked by a submarine ; possibly one of those which Camillo Manfroni mentions as working in conjunction with the *Wildfang*.

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and assisted in the actual embarkation; whilst three light cruisers, four destroyers, and four armed merchant cruisers engaged the enemy's batteries. Outside, the Italians detailed two battleships, three light cruisers, and two flotillas of destroyers to act as a covering force. During the night of the 26th-27th the evacuation was completed, but the losses were severe. Of the 8,000 ashore on the 25th, 600 odd were killed, wounded or captured, and thirteen guns were lost or destroyed.

Throughout the operations the British naval forces had been continually at sea. They had been frequently attacked by submarines, fortunately without loss. In close contact with the shore had been the British drifters, which had netted all the harbours where embarkation was in progress. "No praise is too high for them," writes Admiral Thursby; "their nets have kept off submarine attacks, and, no matter what happens, drifters always appear on the spot. They have already been the means of saving many lives from ships which have struck mines or been torpedoed." The passage of so many troopships between Valona and Corfu was safeguarded by a long line of drifters covering the whole distance with their nets. Between October and the end of February six drifters were lost, two being sunk by gunfire from submarines and four by striking mines. The last was the *Lily Reich*, which gallantly fought a submarine on February 8, only to blow up and sink with all hands at Durazzo on the 26th.

The evacuation of Durazzo by the Italians was the last important incident in the transporting of the Serbian armies. The Serbian troops soon regained their morale and were ready shortly to be taken to Salonica, their new sphere of action. The spring of the year thus found the Austro-Germans in possession of all northern Albania; but confronted by an Italian Expeditionary Force, based on Valona, with a short and easy line of sea communication to Italy.

After the last act of rescue was achieved the war in the Adriatic changed its character. The Austrian Naval Command evidently decided not to risk their ships against the Valona line of communications, which was well to the south of Brindisi; for when the Allied transport ships had finished their work the enemy cruiser raids completely ceased. For many months the British and Italian cruisers swept the Adriatic without sighting anything but their own patrols, or perhaps the periscope of a submarine. The routine work of naval war went on without interruption; mines were laid

off Brindisi and swept up again; the Venice Patrol kept watch off Pola, the Southern Patrol off Cattaro, and from time to time there were rumours of an impending sortie by the Austrian fleet.

In May 1916 Admiral Mark Kerr took charge of the British Adriatic Squadron in succession to Admiral Thursby. The Adriatic had by then become a theatre of guerrilla warfare—although we were committed to a measure which might at any moment bring the Austrian raiders from their anchorages. Ever since September 1915 we had maintained a force of armed drifters in the Straits of Otranto and along the line between Valona and Corfu. At a naval conference held at Malta in March 1916, the French and Italian admirals had recommended that the drifters should be strengthened; the Italians were then getting ready a flotilla for work off Valona, and we had over twenty additional drifters as a reinforcement. The crowd of mosquito craft in the southern basin was thus increasing with every month that went by, and Admiral Kerr, in one of his first letters to the Admiralty, pointed out that they were unprotected, and might at any moment be severely attacked. His warning was justified; but it was many months before the danger came to a head.

## 8

*The Mediterranean—Salonica—January to June, 1916*

When the French and British Governments made their final decision with regard to their military policy in the Balkans,<sup>1</sup> General Sarrail had reached the limit of his advance into Serbia. In his bold and cool-headed attempt to carry out his orders and save the Serbian armies, he had pushed forward the bulk of his troops to the Cerna River. The British forces and a French detachment under General Bailloud were left to protect his communications against a Bulgarian stroke along the defiles which lead southwards into the Vardar valley from Strumitza. But during November the Bulgarians carried the Babuna Pass, and so got between Sarrail and the retreating Serbians; all hope of keeping open their line of withdrawal to Salonica then disappeared.

General Sarrail's position was now one of extreme danger.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Vol. III., p. 223.

<sup>2</sup> Sarrail, *Mon commandement en Orient*, p. 43.

The Bulgarians were pressing more and more insistently upon his immediate front, and an attack against his positions in the Strumitza valley threatened his whole line of communications with Salonica; nor could he forget that there were several Greek army corps in his rear. Would they receive orders to attack him when the time came to order a retreat? For a moment he seems to have inclined, like his naval colleagues in the Aegean, towards an attempt to overawe the Greeks by a naval demonstration. Wiser counsels prevailed. He met Lord Kitchener on November 17, and was persuaded that such high-handed measures would probably lead to his own destruction. They would in any case have destroyed what was for the present the Allied army's first line of defence—the obstinate and even-handed neutrality of the Greek Government. When General Sarrail actually began to withdraw from Krivolak at the beginning of December the Germans made precisely the mistake from which Lord Kitchener's moderation had saved us. Their Military Attaché at Athens presented to King Constantine a telegram from General von Falkenhayn, dated November 29, 1915, to the effect that if Greece failed to disarm the retreating forces of the Entente, or to secure their immediate re-embarkation, the German and Bulgarian armies might very probably find it necessary to cross the frontier. The Skouloudis Cabinet not only refused to consent to this violation of Greek territory, but they skilfully added that if the proposed advance was not hostile to Greece herself, they would refrain from opposing it by force of arms, upon condition that certain guarantees were first given. These guarantees were in fact nineteen conditions, the acceptance of which would have seriously hampered the German command. They were not acceptable to Falkenhayn, and discussions and hesitations followed, which lasted till near the end of May. In the meantime King Constantine had promised Lord Kitchener personally that no attempt should be made during the retreat of the Allied armies to intern or disarm them. The Greek Government confirmed this by a formal undertaking to give the Allies the entire control of railways to the frontier, and to allow them a free hand in "establishing a defensive organisation" round the town of Salonica, and in front of the Chalcidic peninsula. This arrangement was as favourable to us as the proposed naval demonstration would have been disastrous. The troops were withdrawn without difficulty, and early in the new year the entrenched camp at Salonica was completed. From Skala Stavros, in the Gulf of Rendina, it ran along the line of lakes to the western end of the Langaza

geul; from thence it followed the line of hills to Aivali, where the French and British troops joined. The French held the line between Aivali and the Vardar and threw out strong posts to the west of the river. Provision was made for giving naval support to the eastern end of the line at Skala Stavros.

The Bulgarians made no attempt to cross the Greek frontier in pursuit of the Allied troops; and after long conferences and discussions the King of Greece defined his attitude. He protested formally against the existence of an entrenched camp on Hellenic territory, and declared that if the Germans and Bulgars should ever move southwards to attack it, he would move his forces out of the way and not interfere. If, on the other hand, the Allies re-embarked, the Greek army would hold the frontier, and defend it by force, if need be. When, after some hesitation, the Allied Governments decided in December that Sarrail's army should remain in Salonica, the Greek troops were redistributed, so as to leave the Allied communications free. A small watching force was left in the north near Gevgeli; but the bulk of the Hellenic army was divided into two groups: one in eastern Macedonia, to the east of the Struma, the other facing the north-western frontier, to the north and west of Vodena. This concession undoubtedly set up a workable state of things; but, as could be seen at a glance, it was not a permanent or even a stable position. If the Allies should ever leave Salonica and advance once more against Bulgaria, it was hardly to be doubted that the Central Powers would press the Greek Government with fresh demands. Moreover, the naval position still held within it all the material for a conflagration. The Anglo-French squadron at Salonica was anchored under the guns of Kara burun fort;<sup>1</sup> it was inevitable that the Naval Command should be alert and even apprehensive. When the first landings were made, it was noticed that gangs of Greek workmen were at work on the fortifications. Several times the naval representatives had urged that the fort should be seized; but General Sarrail resisted. At a conference between himself and the Greek authorities he received a formal assurance that the coastal batteries would never, in any circumstances, be used against the Entente, and that all work upon them should cease.<sup>2</sup> With this he was obliged to be satisfied; but the naval commanders never reconciled themselves to the position.

<sup>1</sup> The fort was occupied by the Allied forces on January 28, 1916, on the order of the French Admiralty.

<sup>2</sup> Sarrail, p. 322.

After the crisis had passed, and when the evacuation of Gallipoli was complete, it became necessary to reconsider the distribution of our forces in the eastern Mediterranean. For months past the defence of Egypt had been occupying the military authorities, and early in January a force of battleships was detached from Admiral de Robeck's command to protect the canal. At Salonica, the French were given the position of predominating partners, and a composite force of two British and four French battleships, two French armoured cruisers, three British monitors and four French destroyers was concentrated behind the net defence. Its duties were to assist in the blockade of the Bulgarian coast and to support the army ashore. The bulk of Admiral Gauchet's Dardanelles Squadron was based upon Milo, and the remaining British force continued to work from its northern bases off the mouth of the straits.

The naval war in the eastern basin changed its character with the evacuation of the Gallipoli peninsula; the navy could play no part in any offensive operations which might be undertaken in Macedonia; and its principal duties were, henceforth, to be preventive. The objects of the naval force concentrated in the Aegean, as defined in a telegram sent from the Admiralty shortly after the evacuation, were "to watch the Dardanelles, and safeguard the Greek islands in our occupation, to maintain the blockade and submarine patrols in the Aegean, and to support the army at Salonica." Active submarine operations in the Sea of Marmara were practically discontinued.

The redistribution of our military forces had, however, increased the weight of our naval responsibilities; when the Salonica force was finally entrenched and equipped, five British and as many French divisions were being supplied by oversea transport. The defence of Egypt laid even greater burdens upon the navy. The dispositions finally settled by Lord Kitchener and General Maxwell stationed a large defending force in the country; the whole garrison of Egypt, with its administrative units, artillery and transport, now amounted to 222,000 officers and men and 325 guns.<sup>1</sup> There were thus some 400,000 men in the Mediterranean War Area, and their power to fight depended entirely upon the security of a route against which the German submarine commanders were about to concentrate their efforts. There had been a

<sup>1</sup> The higher formations of the garrison were :

One division; one Anzac mounted division; one Imperial Service Cavalry Brigade; four mounted brigades; four dismounted brigades, and two Indian infantry brigades.

lull after the heavy sinkings in November;<sup>1</sup> but it was realised that this was only temporary, and that to meet a renewed attack effectively would be the dominating naval problem of the coming year. In December, representatives of the Allied navies met in Paris to confer upon the situation; and the discussions showed, at once, that the French and British staffs were divided upon the measures to be adopted. The method favoured by British naval opinion at that time was the diversion of shipping to certain definite routes, patrolled by swarms of light craft. The French staff thought differently. They were convinced that German submarines were laying down stores of oil and provisions in the deserted creeks of Crete and Asia Minor, and using them as operating bases. The essence of their proposals was, therefore, that a force of old cruisers should be set apart to search every creek in the eastern basin for submarine anchorages. In the light of later knowledge it can be seen that neither plan was adequate to the pressing need of the moment; but at the opening of the conference each side held firmly to its opinion. It should be added, in justice to both sides, that the opinions of the French Commander-in-Chief, Vice-Admiral Dartige du Fournet, more or less coincided with our own. Before the conference he had sent a detailed plan to the British Admiral Superintendent at Malta, suggesting that about 280 trawlers and 140 destroyers should be allocated to anti-submarine work in the Mediterranean. If these had been available, it is possible that the British and French navies would have carried on the campaign on the same lines. But the requisite force was not available, and it became necessary to devise a new plan of operations. The outcome was that the two staffs agreed to divide the Mediterranean into eighteen areas or zones, of which four were allotted to the British, four to the Italians, and ten to the French. The French Commander-in-Chief was made responsible for arranging the secret transport routes, and the senior officer in each zone kept the routes under patrol with the forces allotted to him—and arranged for the movements of ships within his own area. This conference, which dealt more with the general principles of command than with practical details, was followed by another,

|                        | <i>British ships lost.</i> | <i>Allied and neutral ships lost.</i> |
|------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| October 1915 . . . . . | 10                         | 7                                     |
| November " . . . . .   | 23                         | 18                                    |
| December " . . . . .   | 11                         | 13                                    |
| January 1916 . . . . . | 5                          | 1                                     |
| February " . . . . .   | 6                          | 6                                     |
| March " . . . . .      | 2                          | 2                                     |

held at Malta on March 9, 1916, and attended by the Admirals with local commands. At this Admiral de Robeck pressed for a slight redistribution of the zones, urging that his squadron could undertake larger responsibilities now that it was free of the Dardanelles operations. The French, however, were anxious to retain their position in the Aegean, and this was agreed to, but to complete the compromise the whole of the transport route from Egypt to Malta was made a British zone.

These discussions may be said to have overcome some of the difficulties in a divided command, and to have paved the way for concerted action against the growing menace.<sup>1</sup> For the time being, however, there could be no doubt that the attack had got the better of the defence. As had been foreseen, the lull in March proved to be only temporary; in April sixteen ships were sunk inside the Mediterranean, and in May the figure rose suddenly to thirty-seven. It was the Italian merchant fleet which suffered most severely from the renewed attack; in May they lost over 30,000 tons of shipping, and, in the following month the figure was even higher. As a purely defensive measure the system of patrols and secret routes was not giving good results—and as a means of destroying submarines it was even less satisfactory. Since the beginning of the year, only two German boats had been lost: one (*UC 12*) had fouled her own mines off Taranto, the other (*UB 15*) was permanently missing "from causes unknown."

Such then was, briefly, the course which the war against our sea communications had taken during the first months of the year; such was the unstable and anxious position of our forces on land; and such the harassed and harassing diplomacy of the Greek Government. It is regrettable, but not surprising, to find not many weeks later (June 8) that the strain has at last reached breaking point, and to see the capital of our old Allies yielding resentfully to the loaded broadsides of our naval armament.

The course of events was perhaps as inevitable as any

<sup>1</sup> The decisions and recommendations of the second conference were: (i) to re-arrange the zones of operation; (ii) to recommend that more light craft should be allocated to the theatre; (iii) that the secret routes should be settled and communicated by the French Commander-in-Chief; (iv) that more submarines should be sent to the Adriatic; (v) that all aircraft bases in the Mediterranean should be placed under a central organisation; (vi) that the Mediterranean should be declared a war zone; (vii) that a central wireless intelligence bureau should be established at Malta; (viii) that more directional wireless stations should be established; (ix) that the Allies should assume control of all Greek posts, telegraphs and customs; (x) that Greek and Armenian volunteers should be used for military expeditions.

sequence could be. If the Allies could have found it possible to hold the entrenched camp at Salonica as a mere preventive guarantee, and to remain on guard there, such difficulties as subsequently sprang up might have been solved by slight extensions to the December agreement,<sup>1</sup> but new and quite natural decisions taken in the Allied councils altered the original position, and, at the same time, created new points of friction in the relations between the Allied Powers and the Greeks. In the first place, it was natural that General Sarrail should do everything which he considered necessary to make his military position secure. As he knew that the Greeks would not resist a Bulgarian advance across the frontier, he deemed it proper to close at least one line of approach to his position, and therefore ordered the Demir hissar bridge to be destroyed. This action was bitterly criticised by Greek officers—it interrupted communication between the Greek troops to the east and west of the Struma. What advantage could the Allies obtain, they asked, by crippling the military forces of a nation which they still regarded as a friend and possible ally? General Mahon, to whose loyalty General Sarrail subsequently paid the most generous tribute, was doubtful whether such sudden and drastic action was wise.

Soon afterwards Kara burun fort was occupied by the Allies. The pretext was that a British ship had recently been sunk in Greek territorial waters, where she was by international law under the protection of the Greek Government; but the real reason for our action was the underlying belief that German submarines were receiving information from the shore. Both the French and the British naval staffs seem to have been firmly convinced that some prominent Greek politicians had a secret understanding with the German submarine officers. Doubtless in a country so divided as Greece both the Allies and the Central Powers had numerous partisans; but, in the light of later information as to the tactics of U-boat commanders, it may be doubted whether this charge of connivance between the Greek and German naval authorities was well founded. The German submarine raids upon shipping were governed by the general plan of going as secretly and as unobtrusively as possible to those places where shipping was likely to congregate, and of remaining there for as long as possible. Any system depending on information from the shore would continually endanger the secrecy which was the very essence of the method. When anchored for a rest in some deserted bay, U-boat officers may from time to time have landed and conversed with a shepherd or a charcoal-burner;

<sup>1</sup> See ante, p. 126.

but the probability is that they depended upon their own deductions to lead them to good hunting grounds, and made themselves as independent of the shore as they could. The only charge, then, upon which the Allied action could be expressly founded was the failure of the Kara burun garrisons to guard our ships against U-boat attacks; and the Greeks took it hard that they should be punished for failure in so difficult a task. The occupation of Kara burun fort was, moreover, followed by other measures against which the Greek Government was bound to protest, so long as it adhered to its policy of opposing an impartial resistance to Allied measures which it did not like and to Austro-German demands for concessions to balance them. Corfu was made a French naval base, Castellorizo was occupied—and General Sarrail instituted a severe police régime outside the town of Salonica. He had practically no choice but to act as he did. He was a military commander operating from a neutral town with a very mixed population. The better class was educated and intelligent, but divided by faction; below them lay a mass of small levantine traders whose political sympathies fluctuated with the contents of every bulletin; and lower still was the raceless rabble of idlers, swindlers and wastrels which has no right to the Hellenic name. Who could tell which of these elements might at any moment be in control? On the other hand, it should be remembered that, on more than one occasion, General Sarrail's British colleagues, though themselves keenly alert, were of opinion that he might have issued his proclamations more diplomatically and have enforced them less harshly. Resentment and ill feeling increased during the first three months of the year, and something very like a crisis occurred when M. Skouloudis, the Premier, said that he could not allow the Serbian army to be moved into position over the Greek railways. According to one authority,<sup>1</sup> he added that he would destroy the railway system rather than see his country coerced. These, and other incidents of the same kind, doubtless made the conflict more acute when it occurred; although they did not actually create it. The immediate cause was of a different kind.

The Allied General Staffs had met at Chantilly on March 12, and had decided that the Allied armies, when it became possible, should all assume the offensive together—in the hope that the German resistance would either collapse or be seriously damaged at some point or points by the pressure. The army at Salonica was expected to take a share in this general assault upon the Central Powers; it was not to be reinforced, but was

<sup>1</sup> Abbott, *Greece and the Allies*, p. 88.

to make itself more active when the united attack began. If, however, the Balkan positions were to be altered in our favour by the advent of new Allies, or the withdrawal of other Balkan belligerents, the *armée d'Orient* would then attack at the most favourable moment. The decision, which represented the French view, seems to have been the governing rule of our strategy in the Balkans for the year.<sup>1</sup> General Sarrail was, at first, in doubt as to what was required of him; but the plan that he finally adopted was to baffle his opponents as much as possible, and be ready to make a rapid stroke against Monastir at a favourable moment.<sup>2</sup> In the middle of March, therefore, he began to move his army out of the entrenched camp and extend it in detachments across a broader front.

The inevitable counter-demand followed upon this movement. Pressed by General von Falkenhayn, the German Government protested that the Greek authorities were allowing the Allies an unfair advantage;<sup>3</sup> and, after a series of recriminatory letters, announced that the troops of the Central Powers would be compelled to take possession of Fort Rupel, the key to the Struma valley. It was accordingly occupied late in May, and the Greek troops were forbidden to offer any opposition.

It can hardly be denied that the Greek Government had a valid justification for their consent. The basis of the understanding arrived at in December 1915, between the Entente Powers and Greece, was that if the Anglo-French army remained on Greek soil, the Hellenic army would not help it to attack its adversaries, or impede the Central Powers from advancing against it. The Greek Government could therefore argue that the surrender of Fort Rupel was a mere application of the existing understanding. But M. Skouloudis' Government was by this time so much out of favour with the Allies that any pleading from it was listened to with impatience. General Sarrail proclaimed a state of siege inside the town; the naval authorities urged that action should be quickly and impressively taken. On June 8 Admiral Moreau, of the French Syrian Squadron, occupied Thaso; a partial blockade of the Greek coasts was instituted; and detailed preparations were made for a demonstration against the capital. General Sarrail sent away two brigades to be embarked and to act as landing parties, and Admiral Moreau

<sup>1</sup> At a conference held in the Foreign Office on March 27, General Joffre strongly opposed the British proposal to withdraw a division from Salonica and send it to the Western Front.

<sup>2</sup> Sarrail, p. 85.

<sup>3</sup> Abbott, p. 97.

was put in charge of the naval forces of the expedition.<sup>1</sup> By June 20 the men and ships were assembled in Milo Bay, and lay crowded in the land-locked, airless harbour in the sweltering heat of the Aegean summer. On the following day, the Allied Note was presented at Athens.

The Allies demanded that the Greek army should be demobilised, that a "business ministry" should replace the Cabinet then in office, that the chamber should be dissolved and new elections held, and that all police officers obnoxious to the Allies or their military commanders should be discharged. Nothing was refused; and so, once again, the crisis passed. Our punitive squadron was dispersed, though arrangements were made to reassemble it at a moment's notice, and our naval force in the Mediterranean was entirely devoted to the vital struggle for the control of communications.

<sup>1</sup> The ships detached for the operation were :

|                                 | Tonnage. | Armament.                |
|---------------------------------|----------|--------------------------|
| (a) French :                    |          |                          |
| <i>Patrie</i>                   | 14,900   | 4-12"; 18-16.5".         |
| 2 <i>Waldeck Rousseau</i> class | 27,990   | 28-7.6".                 |
| 6 destroyers                    |          |                          |
| (b) British :                   |          |                          |
| <i>Exmouth</i>                  | 14,000   | 4-12"; 12-6"; 10-12-pdr. |
| <i>Foresight</i>                | 2,850    | 9-4"; 2-T.               |
| <i>Forward</i>                  | "        |                          |
| <i>Hussar</i>                   | 1,070    | 1-4.7"; 2-12-pdr.        |
| <i>Earl of Peterborough</i>     | 5,900    | 2-12"; 2-12-pdr.         |
| <i>M 17</i>                     | 540      | 1-9.2"; 1-12-pdr.        |
| <i>Empress</i>                  | 2,540    | 4-12-pdr.                |
| <i>Peony</i>                    |          |                          |
| <i>Azalea</i>                   |          | fleet sweepers           |
| 4 destroyers                    |          |                          |
| 2 torpedo boats                 |          |                          |
| 2 minelayers                    |          |                          |
| 18 auxiliaries.                 |          |                          |

## CHAPTER V

THE MEDITERRANEAN. JUNE 1916 TO JANUARY 1917

### 1

#### *The Bulgarian Invasion of Northern Greece and its Consequences—An Allied Fleet at the Piraeus*

THE latter half of the year 1916 was a period of suspense and of preparation: the Allies were aware that in the war at sea they were approaching a danger zone the nature and extent of which could not be foreseen with any exactness. The situation in Greece was especially hard to appreciate, because it was complicated by the bitter antagonism of the two political parties, who might be expected in the near future to bring their country into the war equation on this side or on that. In other words, there was here added to the clash of arms a prolonged and obscure diplomatic conflict. Under the head, therefore, of Naval Operations there will fall to be considered not only the overt acts commonly so described, but also the diplomatic action and the difficulties of policy which accompanied or impeded them. A great combined squadron was occupied for six months in a naval operation which did not involve, on our part, the firing of a single shot; but which depended at every step upon the changes and embarrassments of the diplomatic situation. Moreover the episode in question has few parallels in English naval history, and is in several respects unique. Here, as in the Adriatic, our naval force was acting, in a manner unknown in previous wars, as the subordinate partner in a mixed command; while our diplomatic action was being conducted by Ministers acting in concert with the French Commander-in-Chief. For the student of history, and perhaps even more for the naval officer of the future, it is evidently necessary that so instructive a situation should be thoroughly set out.

It may also be as well, for the sake of avoiding any possible misinterpretation, to indicate beforehand the general lines of the course pursued by the Allies, and to suggest here and there the advantages or disadvantages of the turn taken at certain moments. No judgment will be passed either on persons or on Governments, except by necessary implication from the

facts. The failure—for temporarily and in a certain degree there undoubtedly was failure—will appear to have been the result of almost irresistible urgencies. The British Admiral was co-operating with the French squadron, but was not in an independent position. The aim of the two Powers was one and the same; but the problem did not present itself to both under the same aspect. To our Government and to its representative it seemed clear that our end could only be completely attained by a procedure which should avoid the actual use of force, or even the open threat of it. To the French Government it appeared that the time had come for insincerity and prevarication to be dealt with by sternness and even by severity. Upon such a matter and at such a time no difference of opinion could be allowed to imperil the harmony of the Allies or the unity of command: to secure this unity our civilian representative endeavoured for a time to keep step with his military colleague; and it is conceivable that when the critical moment was reached this novel form of co-operation might have proved advantageous, especially as Admiral Dartige du Fournet and Sir Francis Elliot were both men distinguished not only by professional ability, but also by a high sense of their own duty and of the consideration due to others. But under the system adopted, an unforeseen result occurred: when the stern determination of the French Government cut short their admiral's opportunities for tact and conciliation, pushing him forward by definite and unconditional orders, our diplomacy was at once left behind, and our naval commander was deprived of consultative power. Failure followed inevitably: the action taken was unsuitable for the attainment of the end desired.

All the demands in the last note to Athens related to the domestic affairs of Greece, and it fell to the Allied diplomats to see to it that these demands were being complied with. But the internal administration of a country is complicated, and difficult to follow in detail; its supervision by a foreign diplomat must be tactful and uncensorious. Moreover, even if the Greek Government intended honestly to comply with the Allied conditions, the execution of them would take time and must give rise to many questions which would need delicate handling. For some weeks no hitch occurred; the army was slowly demobilised and M. Zaimis, who succeeded M. Skouloudis at the head of a non-party Ministry, was on good terms with the Allied Ministers. A few questions arose about the dismissal of prefects and police officers to whom the Allies objected; and although it must have been very painful to M. Zaimis to remove Greek officials from their posts at the request of a foreign Power, he did not flinch from

this responsibility, and in general he showed himself obliging and conciliatory whenever the Allies had a complaint to make. The position was, however, still very difficult and its future developments were uncertain. By demanding that a business Ministry should be summoned and by insisting that new elections should be held, the Allies had intervened on behalf of the constitutional party which objected to King Constantine's autocratic theory of government. For the moment, thanks to the restraining influence of M. Zaimis, the quarrel between the two parties in the State was only moderately heated; but if anything should happen to blow it into a fresh flame, nobody could foretell how far it might spread or in which direction—it was as likely to scorch the Allies as their enemies.

In the general theatre of war several events now took place which had a great effect upon the situation in Greece. On July 19, the Turks opened their second attack upon the Suez Canal; it was completely repulsed by the British army at Rumani; and, whilst the battle was raging, British and French naval detachments cruised off the coast of Asia Minor and bombarded Marmarice, Makri, Phineka and Mersina. On August 2, General Sarrail, the French Commander-in-Chief at Salonica, who was then reinforced by the Serbian army and by Russian and Italian detachments, launched his Macedonian offensive. The Bulgarians at once replied by counter-offensives on the extreme flanks of General Sarrail's left and right wings. On the left the Serbian army held the Bulgarian attack successfully, and the operations involved none but military questions; on the right the position became more serious. Here General Frotié was watching the Bulgarian frontier towards Brody with a mounted force of ten squadrons and a battalion of Zouaves; a Greek army corps was spread out between Demir Hissar and Kavala.<sup>1</sup> The Bulgarians marched into Greek territory at several points, and General Frotié fell back. The Greek corps, being a detachment of a demobilised army, with its communications running through territory occupied by foreign armies, was obviously unable to resist the Bulgarians. The corps commander withdrew his troops as the Bulgarians advanced; the garrison at Kavala had no line of retreat, and were compelled to surrender to the Germans with all their material.<sup>2</sup> By the last week in August practically all that part of Macedonia which lies to the east of the Struma was in Bulgarian hands.

Seeing that the Allied Generals refused to allow the Greek

<sup>1</sup> Sarrail, p. 142.

<sup>2</sup> The formal surrender of the garrison took place on September 19.

troops to be taken off by sea, and threatened to resist their retirement into Thessaly, it seems hard to maintain that the Greek corps commander could have avoided surrendering. But the difficulty of reviewing the new situation judicially, either at home or on the spot, was very great, and a number of wild rumours added to the prevailing tension. M. Venizelos told the British Minister at Athens that the retirement of Greek troops in eastern Macedonia was, he felt certain, a first preliminary to putting the whole of Greece into Bulgarian and German hands. The Bulgarian army would shortly instal itself at Ekaterini and on the lower slopes of Mount Olympus, from whence batteries of heavy guns would command the whole of Salonica Bay. Simultaneously, the Austro-Germans would march south, join hands with the Greek troops stationed at Larissa, and occupy Athens. The French Naval Intelligence Service at Athens elaborated this forecast by reporting that the Greek Government was collecting rolling-stock at Ekaterini, and that detachments of German cavalry were already at Larissa.

This alarming news was considered and discussed by the British Government on August 23. Their military experts had no difficulty in showing that the danger was quite imaginary, and that it would be utterly impossible for the Germans or the Bulgarians or the Greeks to put a plan of the kind into execution. The Government therefore pointed out to Sir Francis Elliot that, in the view of their advisers, Athens could not be occupied by enemy forces until the force at Salonica had been defeated, of which there was no probability for the moment. In this respect the situation improved; but in another and more important respect it grew worse. The Government had only discussed the technical and more recent aspects of the reports from Athens; it was not yet possible to come to a conclusion on the basic question, whether or no the Greek King and his Ministers were assisting our enemies with advice, secret intelligence and plans for co-operation. The decision that no action ought to be taken on such rumours did not check the growing clamour for "strong measures," "drastic action" and the like, against a Government whose complicity with our enemies was at first suspected, afterwards credited, and finally treated as proved, although no indisputable proof of it had ever been forthcoming.

The Bulgarian invasion very much affected one of the points insisted upon in the Allied Note of June 21. Since agreeing to it, the Greek Government had been preparing for a general election in the early autumn; when eastern Macedonia was overrun the King was actually considering a draft

decree for dissolving the existing Chamber. It had, however, to be considered whether any general election ought to be held at all in the new circumstances. Half the population of Macedonia would be unable to vote; and the constitutional party in Greece were counting upon the support of the Macedonians, who had been united to Greece after the second Balkan war, and were anxious that their political rights should not be whittled away by dynastic absolutism. M. Venizelos urged that the elections should be held, in spite of everything; M. Zaimis that they should be postponed, and in the end the Allies decided to leave the decision to the Greek Government, which thereupon let the matter drop.

As the Bulgarian occupation of Kavala had not, after all, injured the military position of the Allies or impeded General Sarrail's offensive, it might possibly have been better to stand aside from the first and allow the Greek nation to form its own judgment of a Government which made no resistance or protest when the armies of a neighbouring power invaded Greek territory, sacked and burned Greek villages, and committed every kind of savagery upon the defenceless peasants. This, however, was not the view which prevailed. At Paris, and in a lesser degree in London, it was held that the Greek army's surrender of a fort and its munitions to Bulgaria gave the Allies a right to demand corresponding concessions from the Greek Government. The French Government took action at once, and in response to an urgent request from Paris the British Government ordered the Vice-Admiral in the Eastern Mediterranean to detach a force to Milo to co-operate with Admiral Dartige du Fournet. Within a few days a large and imposing squadron had been assembled and placed under the orders of the French Commander-in-Chief. For the moment our Government refused to commit itself, and determined to wait until French intentions were clearer; the first instructions sent out by the Admiralty (August 26) were that Rear-Admiral Hayes-Sadler, who was in command of the British detachment, was "on no account to take part in any offensive action against Greece without explicit orders from here." On the following day the French Government informed Whitehall that Admiral Dartige du Fournet had been ordered to "immobilise the Greek fleet and the Greek General Staff; seize the Austrian crew which, according to the French Naval Intelligence Service, has arrived at Athens to take charge of a Greek submarine; seize all enemy ships at Eleusis; seize all enemy agents and establish control over all telegraph post offices, wireless telegraph stations, coal and petrol depots and railways; and endeavour to cut off railway communication between Athens and the Peloponnese." At the end of the

month, therefore, it was known in London and in Athens that the French were about to make a decisive move with their fleet.

On the very day that these orders were issued Rumania entered the war on the side of the Allies, and almost at once the Greek Government reconsidered its attitude. On August 30, Sir Francis Elliot had a long interview with M. Zaimis, and wired home that the King thought the time had come to abandon neutrality and join the Allies. "In view of the above," wrote Sir Francis, "a demonstration and landing at the present moment, when the political situation seems to be changing so completely, would seem to be ill-timed and might do infinite harm."

But unfortunately the British Government had by then committed themselves, and the warning was unheeded. When the War Committee met to discuss the situation on August 30, they had before them the draft instructions to the French Commander-in-Chief and a memorandum by the French Ambassador in London which ran thus :

"The French Government is persuaded that the enemy headquarters staffs are informed of all the movements of the *armée d'orient* by the Greek military. In these circumstances, Monsieur Briand considers that it is no sufficient guarantee that the Chief of the Greek General Staff has been replaced. So long as it is possible for Athens to communicate with enemy forces by way of Florina, so long as German agents, with the complicity of the Greek authorities, can give information and even supplies to the Bulgarians, the situation will not be settled in such a way as to give security to the offensive of the Allied armies at Salonica. If the *armée d'orient* is to carry out the duties assigned to it, the French Government thinks it absolutely necessary that the posts and telegraphs, the railways and the harbours of Greece should be under its control. All this demands rapid, direct action; and the French Government has made preparations for landing a brigade at Athens or at other selected strategical points in order to support its demands. There is no reason to fear that Greece will raise difficulties. M. Zaimis has been careful to say, and indeed to repeat, that no resistance would be offered to the Entente or to Bulgarians; he has also clearly shown, when discussing the matter with the King, that the Entente must rely upon itself for protection.

"The French Government will only act with the British Government. The French Ambassador has, therefore, been instructed to beg the British Government to agree to a line of action which involves a minimum of inconvenience and is the only one which will ensure success to the Salonica operations. The French Government considers it absolutely neces-

sary that the special troops on board the British ships should take part in the landing operations under the direction of the French Admiral.

"M. Briand considers it essential that the action taken should be rapid, so that it may secure the advantage of surprise, avoid danger from the German submarines, and shorten as much as possible the time during which the ships necessary to the operation will be immobilised.

"To sum up, the French Government asks that the British Government should carry out the operation projected for June 21, to which it previously agreed."

The British Government accepted this responsibility, though with considerable difficulty: in the general interests of Allied unity they agreed to a course of which they could not entirely approve. Their first feeling was one of strong regret that a proposal so far-reaching should have been thrust upon them with so little explanation. Several Ministers were for rejecting it outright, on the grounds that it was most unwise to place M. Zaimis in difficulties, and that the projected operation was provocative and easy to misrepresent.

The outcome of the discussion was that the British Government telegraphed a long and carefully drafted message to Lord Bertie, the British Ambassador in Paris, telling him that the British squadron at Milo had received orders to go to Salamis, under the command of Admiral Dartige du Fournet, to "support the demand" for the control of the Greek posts and telegraphs. The British Government were, however, most reluctant that troops should be landed, as a large number would be required "for a definite military occupation," and a small body might well be endangered if Greek feeling became heated. Further, as the Greek Government had hitherto agreed to every demand made of them, the British Government "were loth to meet the friendly attitude of M. Zaimis' Government with severe measures," and could not agree that the control of Greek harbours and railways was for the moment an urgent necessity. In conclusion the British Government said that they did not believe there was any danger of a "German-Bulgarian incursion towards Athens," and that the situation, as it then stood, was not comparable to the situation on June 21. The telegram very accurately expressed the doubts and hesitations of the British Ministers; but it gave the French what they required. The presence of British ships in the French squadron made the British Government jointly responsible for the policy upon which the French were about to embark. And since it was part of that policy to replace the ordinary diplomatic representatives of the Allied Powers in Athens by Generals,

Admirals and a formidable squadron of battleships, it was made particularly emphatic by British naval co-operation.

The scruples of British Ministers did not in any way affect the final instructions to the French Commander-in-Chief. They were substantially the same as those which had been communicated to the British Government some days previously, except that Admiral du Fournet was no longer ordered to seize the Austrian crew of the Greek submarine, an order which had obviously been based on very inaccurate intelligence. On August 31 he assembled the flag officers on board the *Provence* and told them that he intended to carry out the first two duties assigned to him: the "paralysis of the Greek fleet, more especially of its submarines," and "the capture of enemy merchantmen in the Piraeus."

During the night of August 31, the armada began to steam out of Milo.<sup>1</sup> At eleven o'clock Commodore Heneage sailed

|                         |   | Displace-<br>ment. | Armament.         |
|-------------------------|---|--------------------|-------------------|
|                         | <i>Provence</i> (flag of V.-A. C.-in-C.<br>Dartige du Fournet)            | 23,177             | 10 13·4", 22 5·5" |
|                         | <i>Exmouth</i> (flag of R.-A. Hayes-<br>Sadler)                           | 14,000             | 4 12", 12 6"      |
| 3rd Battle<br>Squadron. | <i>Vérité</i> (flag of V.-A. Darrieus)                                    | 14,489             | 4 12", 10 7·6"    |
|                         | <i>Justice</i>  | 14,860             | 4 12", 10 7·6"    |
|                         | <i>Démocratie</i>   | 14,638             | 4 12", 10 7·6"    |
|                         | <i>République</i>   | 14,605             | 4 12", 18 6·5"    |
|                         | <i>Suffren</i>  | 12,526             | 4 12", 10 6·5"    |
| 2nd Light<br>Division   | <i>Patrie</i> (flag of R.-A. de Marliave)                                 | 14,900             | 4 12", 18 6·5"    |
|                         | <i>Waldeck Rousseau</i> (flag of R.-A.<br>Biard)                          | 13,995             | 14 7·6"           |
|                         | <i>Ernest Renan</i>   | 13,504             | 4 7·6", 12 6·5"   |
|                         | <i>Jurien de la Gravière</i>  | 5,600              | 8 6·5"            |
| Repeating<br>Ship.      | <i>Forward</i>  | 2,850              | 9 4"              |
|                         | <i>Sentinel</i>   | 2,895              | 9 4"              |
|                         | <i>Earl of Peterborough</i>   | 5,900              | 2 12"             |
|                         | <i>M 29</i>   | 355                | 2 6"              |
|                         | <i>M 33</i>   | 355                | 2 6"              |
|                         | <i>Aster</i>  |                    |                   |
|                         | <i>Honeysuckle</i>  |                    |                   |
|                         | <i>Prince Edward</i>  |                    |                   |
|                         | <i>Queen Victoria</i>   |                    |                   |
|                         | <i>Empress</i> (British)  |                    |                   |
|                         | <i>Campinas</i> (French)  |                    | Seaplane carriers |
|                         | <i>Diligente</i>  |                    |                   |
|                         | <i>Impatiente</i>   |                    | French gunboats   |
|                         | <i>Pluton</i> (French)  |                    |                   |
|                         | <i>Perdita</i> (British)  |                    | Minelayers        |
|                         | 16 destroyers (4 British, 12 French)                                      |                    |                   |
|                         | 2 torpedo boats   |                    |                   |
|                         | <i>Hussar</i> , torpedo gunboat (broad pen-<br>dant of Commodore Heneage) |                    |                   |
|                         | 25 trawlers, drifters and Chalutiers                                      |                    |                   |

in the *Hussar*, and the rest of his division, the monitors, sloops, drifters, destroyers and the auxiliaries, followed at regular intervals. At ten o'clock on the following morning the battle squadron weighed and formed single line ahead outside the harbour. Early in the afternoon it reached Phleva Island, where it was met by Commodore Heneage, who escorted the battleships up a channel which he had swept and marked by drifters. As soon as the ships anchored, the *Prince Edward* laid a net between Point Keramus and Lipso Island. The Greek fleet, consisting of the battleships *Kilkis* and *Lemnos*, the cruiser *Giorgios Averoff* and a handful of torpedo boats and submarines, lay at anchor before Salamis dockyard and behind a barrage which was placed across the Giorgio Channel. None of the ships had steam up, and most of the crews were ashore for the afternoon. The cruiser division under Rear-Admiral Biard at once seized the enemy ships off the Piraeus and towed them to the fleet anchorage; so that, by nightfall, the first two sections of the Admiral's orders were executed to the letter. The enemy steamers were in French hands, and the Greek fleet, which could only have put to sea by passing across the batteries of the entire battle squadron in Salamis Bay, was completely paralysed. The rest of the French Government's orders had obviously to be discussed and examined before they could be carried out; and on the following day, M. Guillemin, the French Minister in Athens, and the French Naval and Military Attachés came to luncheon on board the *Provence*.

On the very day that the Anglo-French squadron anchored off Salamis, Sir Francis Elliot had an interview with King Constantine, which showed how tangled and confused the whole situation had become. The King said he was now convinced that the time had arrived for him to declare war against Bulgaria; but he found it impossible to act quickly, for his army was demobilised and the two divisions still in Macedonia were surrounded; in addition to this, he had to think of the Greek population in Asiatic Turkey, who would be exposed to every kind of ill treatment as soon as Greece declared war. The question uppermost in his mind was how far he could rely upon the Entente to re-equip his army with the material necessary for putting it on a war footing. Sir Francis Elliot, who thought that the hesitating attitude of the King might well stiffen into open partisanship of the Entente, if only the situation were handled carefully, was most anxious that the naval demonstration should be brought to an end as quickly as possible, and that the remaining French demands should not be pressed. The right to control the

Greek posts and telegraphs in particular seemed to him a most provocative demand. "Is it wrong," he wrote, "for a neutral Power to use wireless telegraphy if it has no other means of communicating?" If it was necessary to save the face of the naval expedition, could not the Entente Powers be content with demanding the expulsion of Baron von Schenk?<sup>1</sup>

Almost simultaneously with the King's proposal and the appearance of the Allied naval force in Salamis, a further incident occurred which gave fresh evidence that the French and British authorities were not likely to agree as to the best method of dealing with the Greeks. For months past a section of the Greek population in Salonica had been trying to form a sort of temporary local government independent of Athens, and to enrol a local battalion of Greeks to operate under General Sarrail against the Bulgarians. Late in August the leaders of this patriotic movement openly appealed to the Greek garrison for support. Some officers and men enrolled themselves; others said that they would stand by the King and the Government; and, as feeling naturally ran high, the controversy led to brawling and shooting. General Milne was careful that no officers or men under his orders should take any part in a quarrel between the two Greek factions; but General Sarrail intervened, disarmed the officers and men who had refused to desert their colours, and marched the officers through the streets under an escort as though they had been ordinary prisoners. On September 1 they arrived at Athens and were received by the King, who thanked them for their fidelity. The incident made a deep and unfortunate impression in the capital. Sir Francis Elliot said openly that it had done us a great deal of harm; General Moschopoulos, the new Chief of the Staff, a strong friend of the Entente, who was then using all his influence to persuade the King to declare war, spoke of it to the British Military Attaché with the greatest distress; even the temperate blood of M. Zaimis ran hot when he spoke about it to the British Minister.

Sir Francis Elliot's telegram to say that he thought a naval demonstration most unwise, and his further message suggesting that the demands made on the Greek Government should be modified, had arrived too late to stop the promise of British co-operation; but as soon as they were received the War Committee assembled to consider them. Should they act upon these warnings or disregard them? The policy to

<sup>1</sup> Head of the German propagandist section in Greece; formerly Krupp's agent in the Balkan peninsula.

which the British Government were committed was still indefinite enough for them to withdraw from it without actually breaking any undertaking. As at every previous discussion, the Government were strongly divided; but this was the first occasion upon which the general principle of coercion or no coercion detached itself clearly from the usual technical questions about naval and military operations. Several Ministers felt that the real motives of French policy towards Greece were entirely hidden from us: what puzzled them most was the repeated allegations of Greek complicity with the enemy. If, as the French asserted, such complicity could be proved by documentary evidence, why were these proofs never forthcoming? All the Ministers with diplomatic experience were convinced that the time had come to hold back, to treat Greece as an ordinary neutral country, free to place her sympathies where she wished, and to restrict our demands upon her to whatever was made absolutely necessary by the very peculiar position of the Salonica force. The traditional British practice of not forestalling events, but of acting upon them as they arise, was never more strongly expressed than at this meeting; yet the counsellors of drastic action prevailed. Sir Francis Elliot was instructed to associate himself with his French colleague in demanding not only the expulsion of Baron von Schenk, but the seizure of Austro-German ships and the control of Greek posts, telegraphs and wireless stations, unless the situation should have so much changed that these demands were no longer necessary.

The French orders were now, therefore, to be executed. But before a Note could be presented at Athens the technical implications of the demand for control of the Greek posts and telegraphs had to be carefully discussed: what was to be understood by the word control and how was it to be exercised? On September 9, after a long conference between the Allied Ministers and Admiral Dartige du Fournet, it was decided: (i) that no wireless message should be sent in cipher unless it was authorised by the Ministers of the protecting powers; (ii) that controllers were to be stationed at the principal telegraph centres of the kingdom, Athens, Larissa, Janina, and that travelling inspectors were to be appointed; (iii) that certain Greek officials of the posts and telegraphs were to be removed; (iv) that Allied control officers were to have the right to examine everything transmitted; (v) that no telegram was to be sent unless it was stamped with the stamp of the control office; (vi) that no ciphered telegram was to be allowed to pass unless it was being sent by the Greek Government to one of its legations in Allied capitals

or by a neutral legation in Athens; (vii) that the number and substance of every message to neutral and enemy countries, together with the number of groups in it, were to be communicated to the control officers.

Whilst this meeting was taking place, a gang of disorderly Greeks broke into the courtyard of the legation, fired a few pistol shots into the air, and shouted insulting remarks through the open windows. On the following day M. Zaimis called on the French Minister, and agreed that both the guilty persons and the Greek soldiers who had been on guard outside the Ministry for War, and had not interfered, should be punished. This would have closed the incident, but Admiral Dartige du Fournet landed a small legation guard of French soldiers next morning; and thus took the first step in the direction of making armed landings a part of the Allied policy, a step which the British Government had always most vigorously opposed.

Meanwhile the Greek conditional offer to intervene on the side of the Entente had been handed in at Paris and London, and was being examined and discussed. In it, M. Zaimis repeated what he had already told Sir Francis Elliot in conversation: Greece wished to co-operate with the Entente; but desired to know whether the Allies would promise all the war material necessary for re-mobilising the army and for making good the material lost in Seres, which was then in Bulgarian hands. The British Government received these proposals cautiously, and sent a reply to the effect that if Greece ever became an ally, Great Britain would give her all the assistance in her power. There was a certain unreality about the position which had now been reached. King Constantine was avowing his readiness to declare war on Bulgaria, to whom a few weeks before he had voluntarily surrendered fortresses, arms, munitions and territory; and Great Britain was promising to give money and war material to Greece, whose Government was under suspicion of having recently been acting in complicity with our enemies.

## 2

*Further Demands upon Greece*

The British answer was delivered almost at the same time that M. Zaimis agreed to the Franco-British demands with regard to the control of posts and telegraphs. He then resigned, giving as his reason that the new policy of collabora-

tion with the Entente could not be carried through by a business ministry like his own. At their last official interview Sir Francis Elliot asked him whether he had not felt obliged to resign because King Constantine was obstructing the work of the Cabinet in secret; but though pressed very hard, M. Zaimis denied absolutely that this was so, and said that the King was still "tending towards co-operation with the Entente, but had not yet made up his mind."

King Constantine accepted M. Zaimis's resignation, and called upon M. Kalogeropoulos to form a Government. Very little was known about the new Premier; but whatever his character and opinions may have been, the King could not have made a more unfortunate choice. Sir Francis Elliot at once wired home that the constitution of the new Government, which was purely political, was a "flagrant violation" of the Allied Note of June 21, and the British Government took the same view. Moreover, evidence was not lacking that, if the King had really felt inclined on September 10 to join the Allies, within a week later he had changed his mind. At an interview with Sir Francis Elliot the King spoke very angrily about the Allied generals and admirals, complained bitterly about the pressure which was being put upon him by the presence of the French fleet at Salamis, where it lay at anchor with its guns trained upon the capital, and said that months would go by before he could form an army, and that, when he had done so, he would declare war "if he thought it advisable"; but not if General Sarrail's army were defeated during the interval. He added that if he were to join the Entente he should require a promise of Thrace, the Dodecanese, and Albania as far as the River Skumbi. When the interview was over the British Minister wired home that in his opinion the King's former proposals had not been sincere.

The War Committee met to consider the new situation in an altered temper. Since the last meeting, however, the French Premier had positively denied that he wished to upset the Greek monarchy; so that Ministers now felt more reassured about the real purposes of French diplomacy, and refrained from passing anything like a hasty resolution. It was decided, simply, that the attention of the Greek Government should be drawn to the fact that one member of the new Cabinet (M. Ruffo) had openly declared himself an opponent of the Entente.

The British answer to Greece, promising help in the matter of munitions and equipment, had not dealt with the general question of Greek intervention, which could only be settled by

the Allies in collaboration. After long discussions between Paris and London, the Allied Ministers in Athens were instructed to tell the Greek Government that it must give a proof of its sincerity by declaring war against Bulgaria not later than October 1, and a Ministry must be formed capable of carrying through a genuinely national policy. The Allies could not admit that the military unpreparedness of the country was a valid reason against an early declaration of war, for the Bulgarians could not advance farther into Greece than they had already done. In conclusion the Ministers were instructed to give a solemn assurance to the King of Greece that the Entente Powers had no wish to injure his dynasty or the monarchical principle in Greece or in Europe. A Crown Council was assembled at the Diadoch's Palace in Athens to discuss this communication, and, when thus brought face to face with the condition that he should declare war at once, King Constantine flinched. Some days later he appears to have proposed to Paris that the Allies should by an ultimatum order him to declare war upon Bulgaria. Sir Francis Elliot, to whom the King's wishes were known, informed his Government that this tortuous proposal was made in order that the King might appear to decree mobilisation against his will, and that the nation might, in consequence, disregard it. King Constantine could then claim to have done all in his power to assist the Allies, and argue that it was not his fault if the nation would not follow him. The move may have had an even subtler intention than this; and if so, it was successful. Since the King would not accept the Entente's conditions, and since the Entente Governments could not for a moment entertain the King's counter-proposal, no more was heard of Greek intervention for a long time to come.<sup>1</sup>

The British Government were perfectly sincere when they assured King Constantine that they did not wish to injure his dynasty or the monarchical principle in Europe. Again and again they had reminded the French Government that this principle of not interfering with the existing institutions of neutral countries was of the very essence of the Entente's policy. When the relations between Greece and the Entente had become the subject of fresh discussions, nothing had caused the British Government more anxiety than the fear that French policy in Greece was antidynastic, and nothing

<sup>1</sup> The text of the official written reply from the Allies to the King of Greece was settled at the Inter-Allied Conference at Boulogne on October 20. By then the situation had so completely changed, and there was so little chance of Greek intervention, that the Note was unimportant.

had given greater relief than M. Briand's assurance that our fears were groundless. All this was unfortunately hidden from King Constantine, who was quite incapable of detaching his mind from the political passions which raged around him. For weeks past he had never referred to M. Venizelos or to the Venizelist party without some expression of unrestrained hatred. He insisted always that in M. Venizelos he recognised an enemy to himself, to his family and to the dynasty; and knowing that the Entente Governments treated M. Venizelos as their most trusted unofficial adviser, he could not believe that, at heart, they had an honest wish to deal fairly by him even when they found it difficult.

After the King's final refusal to enter the war, M. Venizelos felt that he could no longer remain a passive spectator of a policy which, as he judged it, would bring his country nothing but contempt and discredit; and he now took a step which widened the division between his party and the palace into an open breach. On September 24, he left Greece for Crete, in company with M. Politis, a Permanent Under-Secretary in the Greek Foreign Office, Admiral Condouriotis, an officer who had greatly distinguished himself in the second Balkan war, and General Danglis. He was escorted to Crete by French naval forces, and on his arrival he set up a Provisional Government for the purpose of making war upon Bulgaria.

Nobody on the spot made a shrewder observation upon the new situation than the French Admiral: "It was with regret," he writes in his book, "that I witnessed this exodus, this voluntary elimination. For anyone interested in the Allied cause, it was obviously vexing to see the army, the navy, the administrative services, all gradually abandoned by our friends and passing entirely into hostile hands. The loss was sensible and immediate, the possible gain hazardous and remote. I expressed this view officially and repeatedly."<sup>1</sup> The Admiral was right. Up to the time of M. Venizelos' departure, there was always a party in the Greek Departments of State which was willing to receive the Entente's Notes in a friendly spirit and to execute them with goodwill. From now onwards, the Allies had to reckon upon a determined, obstinate resistance from the Greek administrative services; and bureaucratic opposition can be the most formidable and the most intangible kind of obstacle that exists.

During the discussion which had taken place between Paris and London upon the terms of the Allied Note to Greece, M. Briand had shown an unexpected tenderness with regard

<sup>1</sup> Dartige du Fournet, *Souvenirs de Guerre d'un Amiral, 1914-1916*, p. 134.

to King Constantine, and even after the Allied Ministers in Athens had received their instructions, he put forward drafts for further Allied Notes to the King of Greece, all written in very conciliatory language. After this moderation the next move from Paris was the more surprising; for, without previous consultation, the French Government now took a step which made a reconciliation between the Allies and King Constantine impossible.

Early in October, Admiral Dartige du Fournet, acting upon instructions from the Ministry of Marine in Paris, raised again the question of the non-fulfilment of some of the conditions in the Allied Note of June 21. His instructions were to demand that Venizelist officers in the Greek navy, who had recently been dismissed, should be restored to their posts; that officers of the army and navy who had shown themselves hostile to the Entente should be removed; and that the Piraeus and the Greek railway should be placed under Allied control. When the Admiral communicated his instructions to the Allied Ministers at Athens, he said that he proposed to land 300 French marines to "reinforce the police." Sir Francis Elliot was quite aware that this new series of demands against the Greek Government was part of a general policy of exercising coercion by naval pressure. "We do not know," he wired home, "how far the Allied Governments have delegated executive authority to the French Admiral in matters involving questions of policy and the employment of British and other forces which have been placed under his orders. Point 1 [the return of the naval officers] is intended to counteract the Greek Government's endeavour to prevent a secession of the Greek fleet to Venizelos. Point 2 [the control of the railways and the Piraeus] marks a step in the direction of the complete control of Greece which has been the aim, if not of the French Government, at least of some of its servants." Sir Edward Grey answered at once that "the presence of the French fleet did not entitle the Admiral to act as he liked," and the French Government, realising the difficulty felt by the British Government in abandoning the policy hitherto agreed upon, decided to spend no further time in consultation, but to lay aside the ordinary diplomatic procedure and act directly through the Admiral. On October 6 Admiral Dartige du Fournet seems to have made some kind of communication to the Greek Government, and on the following day he made a threatening move with his battle fleet. "I passed the battleship division *Patrie*, *Suffren*, *Démocratie* and the Russian ship *Chesma* which had just joined us, into Eleusis Bay. The Greek

fleet was thus brought between two fires and completely paralysed.”<sup>1</sup>

The new French demands upon Greece were made to coincide with a Greek internal crisis. Early in October M. Kalogeropoulos resigned, and Professor Lambros, the new Premier, was still forming a Cabinet when the Admiral, acting under orders from Paris, presented his Note and said that if it was not complied with by October 11 he would “take the necessary measures.” Sir Francis Elliot urged that nothing should be done until Professor Lambros was “in the saddle”; and finally, when every argument failed, told the Admiral that he must present his Note direct to the Greek Government, neither he nor his colleagues could consent to be associated with it.

Sir Francis Elliot’s message arrived at a time when the British Government was in very great anxiety about the Rumanian situation. Since Rumania’s entry disaster had followed disaster, and the British Government were bending all their energies to devise some means of saving that country. The Greek situation was only hastily considered, and the political implications of the French Admiral’s instructions were not touched upon.

On October 9, Admiral Dartige du Fournet received a telegram from the Rue Royale instructing him definitely to act without the co-operation of the Allied Ministers at Athens in regard to matters affecting the safety of the *armée d’orient*, and the fleet.<sup>2</sup> Accordingly on the following day the Admiral presented a Note to the Greek Government. The text as communicated to Sir Francis Elliot ran as follows :

“ Although the Greek Government has given partial satisfaction to the demands of the Allied Governments, it has taken certain measures, such as changes amongst officers and crews of its ships and concentration of troops and artillery stores in Thessaly, of an unfriendly nature to the Entente, and regarded by the French Government as compromising the safety of the Allied fleet and of the army at Salonica.

“ The Admiral is also aware that, far from disarming, reservists’ leagues in provinces are arming and maintaining an agitation against the Entente. He can no longer delay taking measures of military protection which he considers necessary, and has therefore decided :

“ 1. To sequestre the fleet, light cruisers, torpedo-boat destroyers, torpedo-boats and submarines of the Greek navy. These ships, on board which will remain only those of their

<sup>1</sup> Dartige du Fournet, p. 138.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 138.

crews who wish to do so and whom the Admiral has no reason to exclude, will join the Allied fleet at its anchorages, or will be brought there. They will remain there until an agreement with regard to them has been come to between the French and Greek Governments. The three large ships will remain where they are, but will land their breech-blocks, torpedoes and ammunition, and will reduce their crews to one-third of normal complements.

" 2. To occupy Lipso Island.

" 3. To insist on the disarming of batteries on Salamis, Giorgio Island and at Perama.

" The Admiral will begin operations October 11 at 1 p.m. He has asked the Greeks to ensure execution of the above measures without violence and that the ships named may be handed over complete in all respects. He requests the Greek Government to confirm these orders, specially as regards Lipso Island and batteries, in respect of which he in this connection has made no communication to the Greek Admirals. Moreover, the Admiral considers it indispensable to assure the security of the Piraeus by removal of, or distribution of, breech-loaders from all batteries except two which he proposes to occupy.

" Lastly, the safety of the army at Salonica demands that control of police and Piraeus-Larissa railway be exercised by officers designated by the Admiral. He consequently asks the Greek Government to inform him to what authorities controllers appointed by him for the port of Piraeus, police and railways should be accredited."

The Greek Ministry passed the whole night in conference, and at eleven o'clock on the following morning a Greek officer arrived on board the *Provence* with a Note saying that the Greek Government protested against this act of violence; that it yielded to *force majeure* and had issued the necessary orders. When the Greek officer went on board he found the whole ship ready for action and the guns' crews at their stations.

At half-past twelve the operation began, and was carried out under the eyes of two French deputies who were on a tour of parliamentary inspection at the time. The light cruiser *Elle*, the store ship *Miaoulis*, nineteen torpedo-boats, two submarines and five auxiliaries were taken to the fleet anchorage. The breech-blocks and munitions of the larger ships *Kilkis*, *Lemnos* and *Averoff* were landed, and their crews reduced to care and maintenance parties. By the evening the work was done, and throughout this painful and trying day, the Greek officers and men behaved with a self-

restraint which did them honour.<sup>1</sup> "It must be admitted," says Admiral Dartige du Fournet, "that the Greek Government did not try to escape from any of its engagements with regard to the fleet. Later visits showed that none of the sequestered ships had been subject to sabotage. . . ." This seizure of the Greek fleet was thus outwardly a success, and many persons who had seen it done congratulated the Commander-in-Chief. "I can say now that he suffered at being compelled by events to use force against a weak neutral nation, against a ward of France, and against a navy in which we counted so many friends. He had to do it, and he did it; but he found nothing in the incident to cause him pleasure or pride, and that was his answer to the inopportune compliments which he received."<sup>2</sup>

The French Admiral was now obliged to enforce the other demands in his Note—for the control of the Piraeus, of the police and of the railways. The technical details of these had not been considered by the French; and, as the Admiral had been told to make his demands direct, he had himself to arrange for their execution without the assistance of the Allied diplomats. He was conscious that the policy of which he was the most unwilling instrument was extremely dangerous. "The Ministry of Marine, like its counsellor [the French Naval Attaché, de Roquetaillade], never seemed to reflect that every inhabitant of Greece could now point in scorn to the Entente's abuse of force. We admitted, officially, that Greece had a right to be neutral, and yet we were putting our hands upon a part of her national life, and were probing into the private secrets of every Hellenic citizen." He accordingly tried to mitigate the effects of what he had to do by placing the most level-headed officers he could in charge of the controls. Commander Portzamparc was appointed chief of the railway control, Commander Roques head of the police, and it should be added that during the weeks of excitement and strain which followed the seizure of the Greek fleet, the Greek Government never uttered a word of complaint about the way in which these officers performed their duties. Moreover, M. Lambros, the new Premier, showed himself as accommodating as he could in the trying circumstances. The Greek Government evidently resolved to bear the humiliation patiently.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> There can be little doubt that the Greek navy, though strongly ententeophil, was royalist in sympathy. When M. Venizelos seceded to Crete, the *Hydra* and two torpedo-boats left their anchorage and joined the Allied fleet. "En somme, le mouvement dissident ne se généralisait pas dans la flotte grecque," writes Dartige du Fournet, p. 137.

<sup>2</sup> Dartige du Fournet, p. 141.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 142.

The French Admiral's view was correct, and events confirmed it both at the time and afterwards. The British Naval Mission in Greece, established several years before, had been a strong link between Greece and England, and had been a centre of British influence in the country. Rear-Admiral N. C. Palmer, who was then the head of it, was universally respected, and the friendships which he and his officers had formed had made the Hellenic navy more solidly favourable to the Entente than any other neutral force in Europe. When the French seized the Greek fleet, Admiral Palmer at once told Sir Francis Elliot that his position was impossible. As he belonged to a Service which had helped to humiliate the Greek navy<sup>1</sup> it offended his sense of justice that the Greek Government should be obliged to pay him any longer. Moreover, apart from this, the Greek navy was disbanded and he had no more work to do.

The Greek naval officers went ashore angry and dispirited, and the King received them and thanked them for their admirable bearing. It would be useless to deny that the Allies damaged themselves seriously by the whole transaction; to have acquired the use of nineteen torpedo-boats and two submarines was not a satisfactory return for the loss of friendship and respect which we suffered.

By openly seceding from the royalist Government at Athens, the Venizelist party created a problem which added to the perplexities of the Allies. The British Government was unanimously of opinion that the Venizelists must be supported; their leader had never wavered in his belief in the Allied cause, and in supporting it he and his companions had suffered exile, and had lost both position and property. Public feeling in France and England was expressing itself very strongly, and British Ministers were determined that the provisional Greek Government should be financed and that the Venizelist army should be supplied with whatever it required. This resolve left over the very difficult question of official recognition. Signor Tittoni, the Italian Minister in Athens, stated it succinctly: what were the territorial limits of the new Government? If the Allies admitted its jurisdiction in certain places, and not in others, they were practically dividing Greece into territories. M. Briand, the French Premier, was especially troubled by doubts. Although he had agreed to the seizure of the Greek fleet, his real policy was to conciliate the Greeks and to bring King Constantine and M. Venizelos together again. He now felt that by openly

<sup>1</sup> A landing party from the *Duncan* had been placed on Lipso Island whilst the French fleet seized the Greek ships.

recognising the Venizelist Government the Allies might so anger King Constantine that they would lose what influence they still possessed at Athens, and add fresh bitterness to the civil dissensions which were raging in Greece. It seemed clear to him that Greece would never be an Ally for us unless the two parties in the State could either abandon their feud or reduce it to the status of an ordinary political controversy under some moderating influence from outside. The British Government gave weight to his judgment, and while they instructed our consular officers in Crete to afford M. Venizelos and his servants all the support in their power, they refrained from giving official recognition to the provisional Government.

The civil divisions of Greece were in no way healed by this indecisive action, and they led directly to the most regrettable of all the episodes in our troubled relations. After the Venizelists had left for Crete, many officers in the army thought it their duty to follow them; the King, in order to check a movement which he thought subversive of all discipline, took severe measures, and a number of officers and civil servants were arrested and thrown into prison. In the country every town and hamlet was divided between the two parties, Royalist and Venizelist. The reservist leagues formed armed bands and attacked and cudgelled their opponents wherever they could find them. In Athens, where royalist feelings ran strong, the Venizelists were often violently attacked, and the Allied Ministers, with shame and indignation, saw their political friends arrested, beaten and thrown into prison. At Ekaterini, on the other hand, the Venizelist volunteers attacked the royalist garrison and drove it out; the French had to occupy the town in order to prevent the soldiers from returning and exacting a fearful vengeance.

The immediate cause of what followed was the action of the King, who, at some time in October, began to collect troops in Larissa. His intention was, without doubt, to suppress the Venizelist movement in Thessaly; but this concentration of troops in rear of the left wing of the Salonica army thoroughly alarmed the French; General Milne, when asked for his opinion as to the meaning of it, answered that King Constantine was probably creating "a zone of independent action at Larissa" in case further pressure was directed against him or his Government at Athens and the Piraeus. "Such action," concluded the General, "in my opinion, is a possible danger."

This question of securing the army at Salonica naturally caused a new set of demands to be presented to the King;

but as the French assumed the whole management of the affair, and treated it as a purely military matter to be settled without diplomatic intervention, it is very difficult to find the exact origins of the subsequent events or even to follow the course of their first development. This much, however, is fairly clear.

No sooner had Admiral Dartige du Fournet carried out against the Greek fleet an order which, as a man of the world, he thought foolish, and as a gentleman, he detested,<sup>1</sup> than he was called upon to open a new series of demands against the Greek Government. We know that his first instructions were to order them to deliver 1,500,000 cartridges, but he does not say exactly how he presented the demand or how it was received.<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile King Constantine and M. Lambros, thoroughly alarmed at the course that things were taking, made a serious attempt to conciliate the Allies. In a series of interviews with Sir Francis Elliot, the King offered, of his own free will, to disband the 1914 and 1915 reservists, to withdraw his troops from continental Greece and leave only 9,000 men in Thessaly; all that he asked in return was that his concessions should be treated as a final settlement, and that no further demands should be made of him. The British Government, being entirely absorbed with plans for stemming the tide of defeat in Rumania, did not discuss or consider this new aspect of the Greek situation; the negotiation was left more and more in French hands, and it seemed, at first, as though it would be successfully concluded. The business was, indeed, most happily advanced by a young French deputy, M. Bénazet, who had been sent to Salonica by the French Parliament to visit and inspect the *armée d'orient*. On his way back he went to Athens, and, whilst he was there, King Constantine asked him to pay a visit to the Palace. The King had always been able to get on with soldiers, and M. Bénazet, as a retired officer, who was besides "young, seductive and with fine courteous manners," made an excellent impression.<sup>3</sup> The first interview went off so well that it was soon followed by others. Everyone on the spot was pleased at the new and better complexion that M. Bénazet's visit had given to affairs, and, after a fortnight's stay in Athens, he returned to France carrying with him a plan for burying the past and for reconciling the Venizelists to the Royalists and the Greek people to the Allies. He had discussed his project with all the Allied authorities and with King Constantine, and thus had an assurance that the Greek Government would put it fairly and loyally into operation.

<sup>1</sup> Dartige du Fournet, p. 141.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 154.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 153.

The plan was that the Allies were to demand the surrender of war material and the demobilisation of the reservists, to compensate them for the military advantages which the Central Powers had gained by being allowed to occupy Fort Rupel and Kavala. Their demand was to be made in the form of a "*Sommation*" drafted in moderate and courteous language; King Constantine's Government would then make a formal protest, after which the King would issue a general proclamation to the Greek people, beginning: "I owe to my people a frank explanation with regard to my conduct during the present course of events," and going on to say that he agreed to the Allied demands in order to maintain a strict neutrality between the two belligerents. A condition upon which the King insisted was that the Allies should promise him that the arms and munitions which he surrendered should not be handed over to his political opponents. He desired that the Entente should consider themselves under an obligation to preserve his throne in return for the concessions he had made to them. The agreement thus reached, combined with the King's promise to withdraw his troops from Thessaly, would give the Allies the right to enrol Greek volunteers of the Venizelist faction and the power to arm them from our own resources; and it would end, once for all, the friction and misunderstandings between Greece and the Allies. All existing causes of quarrel would go, and, if new ones arose, they could be talked out more easily in an atmosphere of goodwill and mutual understanding. M. Bénazet urged his Government to carry through his plan. "It is to be hoped," he wired home, "that during the period in which Greece makes arrangements for giving us volunteers and munitions of war, and affords us all the support she can without ceasing to be neutral, all these daily bickerings on points of detail will cease. The King and the President of the Council are, however, well aware that certain persons are averse to this reconciliation. [M. Bénazet was doubtless referring to the French Naval Attaché.] They have, none the less, decided to show the greatest patience until a final agreement has [been reached and] borne fruit. They have both charged me to say that they have entire confidence in the Commander-in-Chief of the Allied naval forces. . . ." 1

These proposals were brought to the notice of the British Government at the Inter-Allied Conference which took place in Paris on November 15; but they were only revealed in conversation by M. Briand, and were not communicated in documentary form. The result was that no decision was taken,

and the conference agreed with M. Briand that the Allies might as well wait for developments which could not be long delayed. To adopt this suggestion, and to leave the matter where it stood, was perhaps the greatest mistake that the Allies made in Greek affairs. It may seem that if King Constantine's offer had been accepted, and if his execution of it had been supervised with forbearance and goodwill, his differences with the Allies might have been satisfactorily composed.

Yet this is not certain; for no one could be certain about King Constantine. After making his offer through M. Bénazet, he strove repeatedly to show that he was really endeavouring to carry out his pledges; he recalled the IIIrd and IVth Corps to the Morea and agreed that he would not in future move troops without previously consulting the Allies. But in another respect his conduct was baffling and difficult to understand. The whole basis of his understanding with M. Bénazet had been that the Allied demands should be presented in a Note, to which he should agree: the Note and its reply would then form a written understanding between the two parties. But no sooner had M. Bénazet gone back to France than King Constantine asked Sir Francis Elliot that the Note should not be presented, and that he should be allowed to carry out his engagements voluntarily. To this surprising and ambiguous request no answer was given.

Meanwhile events had moved quickly. At the end of October two Greek steamers were torpedoed by a submarine; the Entente Governments used the incident as a pretext for expelling the enemy legations from Athens. On November 2 Admiral Dartige du Fournet presented a Note to the Greek Government in which he asked for the right to man the sequestered ships of the Greek fleet and use them in the naval service of the Allies. The Greek Cabinet refused to agree, but the Admiral hoisted the French flag on board the torpedo boats and took possession of Salamis arsenal. Sir Francis Elliot thereupon protested to the French Minister that the Entente Powers could not bear responsibility for measures resolved upon and carried out solely by the French Government or its officers.

The French Government, however, continued to act independently. The Note demanding the surrender of war material was now nearly ready. It was, apparently, drafted by M. Guillemin, acting in collaboration with General Sarrail and with General Roques, the War Minister, who was then on a visit to the *armée d'orient*. The British Government were

not consulted about the negotiations or asked to approve or amend the draft. The French Cabinet seems, indeed, to have given General Roques full powers to settle all outstanding questions with Greece by the simple method of giving the necessary orders and letting the Greek Government know them. He decreed that a base should be established at Itea, in Greek territory, and that the transport of troops along from it should begin at once; then, having approved the Note demanding the surrender of Greek war material, he left for France, after telling Admiral Dartige du Fournet that he must be responsible for presenting and enforcing it. "Nothing," writes the Admiral, "authorised me to raise serious objections. I could but obey."<sup>1</sup>

When this Note, which bore such fatal consequences to the King and to the Allied cause in Greece, was ready for presentation, the political position in the capital was to the last degree confused. Since M. Venizelos and his friends had seceded, the King had pushed on with his measures for maintaining discipline in the services. Officers who had abandoned the regular army were cashiered and deprived of their pensions, and numbers of others were arrested and thrown into prison on mere suspicion. Civil servants, magistrates, mayors of towns and villages, were treated in the same way. The Liberal press was muzzled, the offices of the *Ethniki* and the *Hestia* were closed, and the editors arrested and imprisoned. Whenever a man was held in detention, his house was visited and pillaged by gangs of soldiers; sometimes the escort sent to arrest a man would kill him on the way to the magistrate. An eminent Venizelist was bayoneted in this way, and his body lay in the street until dark, because his family dared not venture out to remove it. The magistrates, who remained attached to the royal cause, examined accused persons with the utmost brutality; many of them were beaten to the ground by police officers whilst they stood in the dock to answer questions from the bench. Rumours were abroad that these measures were mere preliminaries, and that all avowed Venizelists in the army and navy would soon be shot as rebels. In country towns and villages matters were even worse. The reservist leagues made themselves the accusers and judges of all who disagreed with them. These outrages made Sir Francis Elliot's blood boil; he thought himself bound in honour to protect the Venizelists if he could, and to show his detestation of the ill treatment they were receiving; he was accordingly doing everything he could to press the Greek Ministers with interviews and protests. Prince Demidoff,

<sup>1</sup> Dartige du Fournet, p. 183.

whose Government was a little concerned lest the course of events should dislodge King Constantine, was spending his whole time in trying to reduce the growing friction between the Entente and the King; the Italian Minister had always rather held aloof; his Government, like the Russian, distrusted and disliked the Venizelist party. Whilst the other three Allied Ministers were thus concentrating their attention upon different aspects of the Greek situation, the French completed the preparation of their Note. It was presented on November 16 by Admiral Dartige du Fournet and ran thus :

" MONSIEUR LE PRESIDENT,

" During the last few weeks, the Greek Government has been able, on more than one occasion, to make quite certain that the Entente Powers recognise Greece's right to remain neutral in the present conflict. By the setting up of a neutral zone in the north of Thessaly, you are guaranteed against any attack by armed forces such as happened at Ekaterini.

" The Greek Government has, on the other hand, repeatedly stated, in the most definite way, that it is maintaining a benevolent neutrality with regard to the Entente. Amongst the proofs of benevolent neutrality thus given must be counted the much-appreciated measure of putting the army on to a peace footing and the withdrawal of the IIIrd and IVth Corps, and the 16th Division, into the Peloponnese. But it is equally true that the surrender of Fort Rupel and of Kavala to the Bulgarians, and the delivery to them of the important mass of war material in those places, has given the enemies of the Entente Powers considerable advantages (*rupture d'équilibre au profit des ennemis de l'Entente*).

" The French Government, being anxious to retrieve these advantages, and wishing to put an equal quantity of war material at the disposal of the Commander-in-Chief of the *armée d'orient*, has decided to demand that the Greek Government shall deliver up all that war material which is rendered useless to it by the reduction of the army to a peace footing.

" I have therefore received an order from my Government to demand from the Greek Government : sixteen field batteries with 1,000 projectiles for each gun; sixteen mountain batteries with 1,000 projectiles for each gun; 40,000 Mannlicher rifles with 220 cartridges for each rifle; 140 machine guns with a corresponding number of cartridges, and fifty transport automobiles.

" In a recent Note on the subject of the light forces of

the fleet, I informed the Greek Government that I had the necessary powers to offer a just payment for all deliveries made; but no answer was given.

"I have the honour to inform you, herewith, that the French Government is still inclined to offer you a suitable payment for the war material delivered to it, or else to bind itself to give back an equal quantity of material, in good order, at the close of hostilities.

"As you cannot but be aware that the present course of events makes this demand an urgent one, the French Government requests that the Greek Government shall give a proof of its goodwill by at once delivering ten mountain batteries to me, the rest of the material to be handed over with as little delay as possible.

"The material is to be deposited at the Thessaly railway station, in Athens, from whence we shall carry it to Salonica; and I ask that an officer nominated by you shall be sent to me to settle details."<sup>1</sup>

It will be seen that this Note was not in any way harsh or peremptory. Since the source of all these demands was a suggestion from King Constantine himself, the French Government had every right to make them, and, indeed, to expect that they would be agreed to. If there was any fault, it lay not in the Note itself, but in its omissions and in the manner in which it was presented. When King Constantine first made his proposals to M. Bénazet he was evidently given to understand that his difficulties at home and abroad would be sympathetically considered; and so believing, he had stipulated that the arms and munitions which he surrendered should not be given to the Venizelists, and that he should not lose his throne by abandoning Thessaly to his political enemies. The Note promised him nothing. The Entente Powers could not, it is true, have given open undertakings against the Venizelists who had adhered to the Allied cause at the cost of so much suffering to themselves. But it may be that if their diplomatic Ministers had been instructed to go on with the negotiation which M. Bénazet had begun, to bring it to perfection by further discussions and conversations, and to draft the Note on the basis of agreements reached during the course of those discussions, an acceptable text could have been presented. Yet it must be admitted that here again the circumstances were not such as to suggest of themselves a sympathetic and delicate method of dealing. Naval commanders have more than once in European wars

<sup>1</sup> Dartige du Fournet, pp. 188-9.

shown themselves to be shrewd and tactful negotiators. But in the present struggle King Constantine had already given too much proof of his ingenuity and too little of his goodwill or sincerity; he had exhausted the patience of those in whose hands lay the overwhelming executive power. It was therefore, from our point of view, a mistake to remove the conduct of the affair at this stage from the cool and dexterous hands of professional diplomacy and to entrust it to the commander of an irresistible force, who had orders to carry out, and was given no powers of delay or discretion.

As soon as the Greek Cabinet had considered the Note, King Constantine asked Admiral Dartige du Fournet to come and see him. The Admiral describes him as "absolutely courteous, and, indeed, almost cordial," but adds that "his attitude had obviously changed." He certainly made clever use of the weak points in the French case: why was the Note presented by a Naval Commander-in-Chief in the name of the French Government? What guarantee had he that if he agreed to what France demanded of him, another Allied Power would not send another fleet and ask for fresh sacrifices? How could he be expected to make the present demands acceptable to the Greek people, when they were unaccompanied by the guarantees which had been the starting point of all his proposals to M. Bénazet? He then made a telling point about the behaviour of certain French officers in Athens, and asserted that arms and munitions for the Venizelists were stored in the French Naval Attaché's offices; this, it seems, the Admiral could not deny.<sup>1</sup> In conclusion, the King said that he was overborne by public opinion and had no power to compel the delivery of the material demanded. Admiral Dartige du Fournet, who, throughout the business, gave proof of much shrewdness, wired home to say that "even if the King did not personally refuse to agree to the demand, he would do nothing to get it accepted by the army." The impression left upon him was evidently that the King had discovered that his party would not endorse the promises he had given to M. Bénazet, and was striving to escape from them by accusing the French of breach of faith. He sympathised with the King in this dilemma, but was by no means persuaded that he was entirely straightforward.

On November 21 the Greek reply was handed to Admiral Dartige du Fournet. In this, after reciting the contents of the French Note, the Greek Prime Minister continued: "As I do not wish to discuss why the Greek Government was com-

<sup>1</sup> He had no responsibility in the matter; the French Intelligence service at Athens was not under his orders.

elled to offer no opposition to the surrender of those forts [Rupel and Kavala] and to the capture of the war material in them, I shall confine myself to letting you know that the Greek Government then in power could not act otherwise without abandoning neutrality; that it protested absolutely; and that it let the Entente Governments know both the terms of its protests and its own point of view upon the matter.

" As for the equilibrium between the Powers at war, I can assure you that your information is not correct. As you can see from the table annexed hereto, the naval and military authorities of the Entente have 191 Greek guns of various calibres in their possession, most of which are quick-firers of the latest model; the Germano-Bulgars, on the other hand, have only 124, most of which are old and useless. Also, you have in your hands more Greek machine-guns and rifles than your enemies.

" After being so conciliatory, since it came into power, and after giving you so many proofs [of good-will] by settling in a friendly way those questions raised in the Notes which you have sent to it on several occasions, the Greek Government had the right to hope that it would not, in future, be presented with demands which, by their very nature, cannot possibly be accepted.

" If it surrendered its war material, the Greek Government would be committing so flagrant a violation of its neutrality that the Central Powers, which have already protested forcibly against the seizure of the light craft in the Greek navy, would without doubt look upon it as a hostile act. Besides this, public opinion in the country, which is showing itself clearly on the present issue, would not tolerate it if Greece were disarmed and left without means of defending its vital interests, should they ever be in danger.

" For these reasons, Monsieur l'Amiral, I am obliged, on behalf of the Greek Government, to refuse absolutely to accede to your demands, dated November 16, and have every hope that you will agree that my refusal is well founded.

" SPYRIDON LAMBROS."

Admiral Dartige du Fournet answered the Greek refusal as firmly and as tactfully as he could: "I cannot admit," he wrote, "that a country so enlightened as Greece could think it intolerable to yield to Powers towards which she professes a benevolent neutrality arms and munitions which are not in use by her armed forces, but are lying in depots." Then, after showing how the French demands contrasted with the

Bulgarian invasion of Greek territory, he went on: "If only it were more enlightened, Greek public opinion would have realised that there is nothing in this surrender of arms which could offend against the warmest feelings of patriotism or the rules of international law. These arms are intended for liberating territory where the noblest blood in Greece has been shed: their proper place is not in a depot or a magazine, but on the fronts of Monastir and Macedonia, where the fate of all Balkan peoples is being settled." He closed by saying that the orders under which he was acting made it impossible for him to discuss the matter further, and that if the ten mountain batteries were not delivered by December 1, he would take "all those measures which the situation called for." The French Ministry of Marine, on being informed that matters were moving to a crisis, told him to ask for reinforcements from the *armée d'orient* if he thought them necessary. He decided to act alone, mainly because he thought it most important that there should be no delay in making his demonstration. He was helped by the French Military Attaché in drawing up plans for occupying the important points round the capital, but he was certain that if he called for additional forces from Salonica, the whole operation would have to be postponed.<sup>1</sup>

Shortly after he had received his orders from the Rue Royale, Admiral Dartige du Fournet made his last visit to the palace. King Constantine assured him that he personally was full of goodwill, but that this demand for arms and material had so roused the public and the army that he could no longer control the situation—an unfortunate confession from a monarch who had replaced the parliamentary institutions of the country by a personal autocracy of his own. Finally, as though to show his conciliatory feeling, he insisted that if only the quantities of arms and munitions to be surrendered could be reduced, an agreement could certainly be come to. The French Admiral perceived, no doubt, the inconsistency of this huckster's offer with the King's concluding statement at the previous interview: he answered firmly that there was no time for further negotiations, and that he was going to send his landing parties ashore on December 1. Just before leaving he asked the King whether the Greek Government would maintain order whilst the Allied landing parties were ashore in Athens. The King said he would look into the matter, and two days later Admiral Dartige du Fournet received a letter from Count Mercati, the master of the King's household. It ran as follows:

<sup>1</sup> Dartige du Fournet, pp. 189-201.

**"MONSIEUR L'AMIRAL :**

"By order of his Majesty, I have the honour to transmit to you the assurance of my august master that neither the persons, nor the private houses, nor the shops of Venizelists are in danger, since the police and the authorities of the kingdom, whose duty it is to maintain order, will exercise the strictest supervision and will guarantee their security. These high assurances are, of course, given under the formal condition that neither the secret police in the service of the Allies nor the landing parties will arrest, deport or remove Greek subjects, and under the further condition that the Venizelist partisans on their side will refrain from committing any act of violence, any excess or any abuse which might provoke reprisals."

This astute and evasive letter gave no promise with regard to the landing parties; but it certainly conveyed the impression that they would not be opposed. Admiral Dartige du Fournet was clearly intended to assume from the wording of the whole note that there was to be no disorder of any kind, and therefore that his landing parties would not be interfered with; and he himself goes so far as to say of it "*la promesse était ferme.*"<sup>1</sup> What he means, of course, is that an implied undertaking is as binding as an avowed one. Doubtless it would be so to him; but he was dealing with men who had a wholly different view of the use of language.

Before landing his troops Admiral Dartige du Fournet sent home a telegram to say that the root of the whole trouble was that King Constantine had not been given any guarantees against the disruptive activities of the Venizelist party. "My personal opinion," he wrote, "is that, as the King has not received the guarantees for which he hoped, and which were given in detail in my telegram No. 11683 A 531 of November 8, he considers that he is freed from his promises, and is not very anxious (*met très peu de zèle*) to perform them." In the opinion of the Admiral, therefore, there had been a falling short on the French side; and he had not only the sense to grasp it, but the courage to say it.

The Greek Government still owed the Admiral a reply to his last Note: it was handed in on the afternoon of the 30th, and repeated the previous refusal to surrender arms and

<sup>1</sup> It should be added that he states in his book (p. 204) that, at his last interview with him, King Constantine promised that the Greek troops would have "orders not to fire first." Nobody can doubt that the promise was given verbally; and it is most significant that it was not confirmed in the letter from Count Mercati. King Constantine was probably speaking the truth when he said that he was "*débordé.*"

ammunition. In the evening the Admiral attended the daily conference of Allied Ministers. They were all very anxious. For the past week Athens had been in a ferment; the people of the capital were rallying round the King, volunteers were being enlisted and armed, and the army was evidently in an ugly temper. The Allied Ministers, who realised that this rising anger might provoke a regrettable incident, asked the Admiral whether some compromise was not possible; could not the French insist only on the surrender of ten mountain batteries, and waive their other demands? The Admiral answered that he personally agreed with them; but that his orders prevented him from negotiating further. This, indeed, was the real evil: the line of division between diplomatic and military action had disappeared, and the Admiral, who was now the chief Allied representative in Greece, was not given freedom to act as a diplomatist. He was still bound by those "superior orders" which are the very essence of military discipline, and was thus unable, at a critical moment, to carry out the political duties which had been thrust upon him. If only he had been given instructions of the ordinary diplomatic kind, the tragedy of the following day would not have occurred.

Just before the meeting broke up, Count Mercati called upon the legation and suggested a compromise; with a heavy heart the Admiral replied that he had no powers to treat. A few hours later the landing companies were marching upon the Greek capital from the Piraeus.<sup>1</sup>

## 3

*The Landing Parties at Athens<sup>2</sup>*

The object of the landing operations was to establish a force of some three battalions of seamen and marines on the hills which dominate Athens from its south-western corner—the Nymphs, the Philopappos and the Phynx—and to hold the Zappeion theatre—another commanding point—with a second detachment. In addition to this, outpost companies were to seize a powder factory to the west of Athens on the road to the pass of Daphne, an arsenal called the Rouf on the Piraeus road, and a cartridge factory to the south-east of the city. The three landing battalions were placed under the charge of Captain Pugliesi-Conti. Major C. D'O. Harmar, R.M.L.I., who was in command of the British force, composed

<sup>1</sup> Dartige du Fournet, pp. 201–13.

<sup>2</sup> See Map 7.

of three companies of marines from the *Exmouth* and *Duncan*, was under the immediate orders of Commander Millot, the officer in charge of the third battalion.

Between three and five in the morning of December 1, the battalions marched up from the Piraeus, and by nine o'clock every point except one had been occupied without opposition. One company from the first battalion was at the Daphne powder factories, another was in support, and the two others were at the Rouf. The second battalion was installed on the Phynx-Philopappos position, where it was reinforced by a party which had been sent to the Zappeion some days before the landing began. The third battalion, which included the British contingent, was at the Zappeion theatre.

There had been no hitch; but Admiral Dartige du Fournet was anxious. Early in the morning he received news that Greek troops were massing near the capital, and at once decided to go to Athens himself. At eight o'clock he left in a motor car, accompanied by Captain Chamonard and Commander Douxami. As he passed through the Piraeus his anxiety increased; Greek troops had occupied the school which had been assigned to the French colonial troops by the municipality, there were Greek soldiers everywhere, and the crowd was in a black, sullen temper. He told the French commanding officer to occupy another building near by and to watch the Greek troops carefully. At nine o'clock he reached the Zappeion. As he came up, Commander Millot ordered Major Harmar to occupy the powder magazine and cartridge factory to the south of the town with a British company, reinforced by a French company under Lieutenant Dévé. The situation, already clouded, now began to darken; Greek troops were assembling at all points which the French had occupied, and the Admiral saw that they were in an ugly mood. After speaking for a few minutes to Captain Pugliesi-Conti at the Zappeion, he went across to the Philopappos, where he found a company of Greek soldiers facing the French marines. He asked the commanding officer, Major Constantine Grigorakis, to withdraw his men; the Greek officer replied angrily that his orders were to defend the monuments of his country. At about the same time news came in that a French supply company had been stopped on the Piraeus road and its baggage taken from it. Admiral Dartige du Fournet undertook to settle the matter with the Greek Government, and for the next hour nothing occurred except the steady massing of Greek troops. Major Harmar and Lieutenant Dévé found Greek troops at the cartridge factory and the powder magazine; the Greek officer in charge was

fairly civil, and said that he would remove his men as soon as Major Harmar withdrew. But at eleven o'clock, when their concentration was complete, the Greek troops opened fire at every point; each of the Allied detachments was attacked simultaneously. The moment had obviously been chosen beforehand, for the attack had all the precision of a military movement prepared and executed by a central command. Afterwards, the Greek Government claimed that the French had fired first, and, when they found that this accusation was untenable, they said that the Venizelists had started the fighting. Major Harmar's report is good evidence that the Greek troops acted deliberately, and that they were under orders; it runs thus: "I signalled to the Zappeion, reporting the movement of Greek troops I had observed, and, shortly after, received an order from Captain Millot ordering me to return to the Zappeion with both companies. The Greek colonel was still with me when I received this order, and I informed him that I was going to withdraw. He said that he would move his men away directly I left, and at the same time ordered a Greek company, which had come up on my right flank, to move further back. A few minutes later, a few shots were fired on Philopappos hill, and I could see people running down the hill and the French standing up on the top. Lieutenant Dévé agreed with me that the French were firing blank to frighten the crowd back. I immediately ordered both companies to fall in; the French, at the time, were on the Zappeion side of the magazine, and the Royal Marines on the opposite side. I ordered Captain Palmer to move his company off, and went round to tell Lieutenant Dévé to follow. *Just then, about eleven o'clock, heavy fire was opened on us from all sides. . . .*"

If the Greek army had told the Allies, through King Constantine, that to surrender their guns and munitions was a dishonour and an indignity that they would not bear, and had said outright that they would fight rather than suffer it, they would be entitled to our respect. But the behaviour of the Greek colonel who opened fire after the British and French had formed up in the open, relying on his promise to withdraw, puts the matter in another light. The indignation of the Greek officers was in itself honourable; but they undoubtedly gave expression to it by a concerted act of treachery.

It seems probable that the Greek High Command intended to overawe the French detachments by surrounding them at every point; and having done so to make them withdraw ingloriously after intimidating them with a few volleys. If

so the whole plan was brought to nothing by the stubborn courage of the French seamen. At the powder factory on the Daphne road, at the Rouf, at the Zappeion and at the Philopappos they stood to their arms, returned the Greek fire shot for shot and volley for volley; and a few minutes after eleven, every occupied point was the scene of a desperate struggle. At one place only did the Greeks score anything which could be called a success: Major Harmar's company was completely cut off from the Zappeion and had to fall back upon Phalerum. Just to the north of them Lieutenant Dévé and Captain J. M. Palmer, R.M.L.I., managed to get their men into the magazine, which they held for the rest of the day; and it was here that Lieutenant Dévé was mortally wounded whilst firing a maxim gun with his own hands.

The French detachments were completely surrounded, and could only fight where they stood; Captain Pugliesi-Conti was at the Philopappos, the Admiral at the Zappeion; signals could be exchanged between the two positions, and Admiral Dartige du Fournet could communicate with the French ships in the Piraeus. At a quarter to twelve, he sent a message to the French ships in the bay to open fire on the Stadium, where the Greeks, strongly installed, were firing heavily at the Zappeion position; it is to his honour that he absolutely declined to order a general bombardment of the capital. Whatever happened he would never have it said that he made a Louvain of Athens.

After the fight had gone on for nearly an hour, and the Greeks had got no advantage from it, Admiral Dartige du Fournet received a message from King Constantine; would the Admiral compromise and accept the surrender of six mountain batteries? The Admiral told Captain Pugliesi-Conti that he was going to treat with the Greeks, ordered the *Provence* to cease fire, and with great difficulty got into telephone communication with M. Lambros, the Premier. Shortly afterwards the fire from the Greeks died down, and several members of the legations reached the Zappeion without interference. General Bousquier, the French Military Attaché, came up to confer with the Admiral, and Madame Bousquier accompanied him to tend the wounded. Meanwhile, the Admiral answered that he accepted the Greek offer; but that it must be repeated to the Allied Ministers at the legations. This exchange of messages took time, and the afternoon passed more or less quietly, although the Greek troops on the Stadium and the Acropolis occasionally opened fire for a few moments. At half-past four the Greek troops again opened fire at all points, and the conflict blazed up afresh.

The French seamen on the Philopappos were brought under a heavy fire from the Acropolis, and the Zappeion was swept from the Stadium. This second onslaught, like the first, was deliberate and concerted; and Admiral Dartige du Fournet again signalled to his ships in the Piraeus to open fire on the Stadium. The effect was excellent; the Diadoch's palace, where the King was installed, stands quite near the Stadium, and the first shells fell in the courtyard. The Queen and the children were sent below into the cellars, and soon afterwards the Greek troops ceased fire.

At a quarter to seven Colonel Pallys, King Constantine's aide-de-camp, arrived at the Zappeion with Sir Francis Elliot, M. Guillemin, and Prince Demidoff, the Ministers of Great Britain, France and Russia. An agreement was soon reached. King Constantine promised that six mountain batteries should be surrendered, as soon as the landing parties were withdrawn; Admiral Dartige du Fournet undertook to recall the bulk of the three battalions landed, but kept a party on the Zappeion; he refused to promise that the party which remained behind should not be reinforced, and he warned the Greek authorities that the withdrawal of the landing parties was only "the preliminary to grave events." The retirement of the troops began at about eleven o'clock, and continued throughout the night. The positions at the Rouf, the Daphne road and the Philopappos were evacuated in good order—and the prisoners taken by each side were exchanged before the march to the Piraeus began. Although the French seamen had been surrounded in their positions and outnumbered by four to one they had fought so fiercely and stubbornly that they had eighty Greek prisoners to exchange against sixty of their own when the day was over.<sup>1</sup> They had lost 191 officers and men killed and wounded; the British twenty-one killed and wounded. Major Harmar's Marines, who retired on Phalerum after they were cut off from the Zappeion, suffered most. This forced withdrawal of the British Marine detachment was the only positive achievement that the Greeks could claim, and it was not one to boast of. After dislodging the Marines by a treacherous promise of reciprocal withdrawal, the Greeks took up positions on their flanks and kept them under a galling fire during the whole of their retirement; but the Marines never broke their order of march or showed the slightest concern. They carried out their orders to the letter, picked up their dead and wounded as they fell, and marched on with proud stolidity until they reached old Phalerum.

<sup>1</sup> Dartige du Fournet, p. 236.

The Greek Government were more scrupulous than their army in carrying out their agreement with Admiral Dartige du Fournet. The dead men were brought down to the Piraeus on the following day by a party of French stretcher-bearers, headed by two doctors and an abbé, who had worked all day in and about the places where there had been fighting, and had received neither injury nor insult from the Greek officials or the Greek population. On the following day, December 3, the funeral took place at the Piraeus. As the cortege went past, the Greek troops turned out, and the Greek population uncovered.

In another respect, however, the Greek authorities acted in the way most calculated to exasperate the Allies. As soon as the landing parties had withdrawn, soldiers and armed reservists turned savagely upon the Venizelists, and all day on December 2 they sacked and looted their houses and bludgeoned everybody who resisted them. A handful of stout-hearted Cretans installed themselves in M. Venizelos's house, and defended it for the best part of the day before they were finally overpowered. On the following day, the royalists had completely mastered their opponents, and they began a systematic round up. All day long arrested Venizelists were marched in fours, with their hands tied behind their backs, to places of detention. The ordinary prisons soon overflowed and schools and theatres were requisitioned. The houses of the arrested men were pillaged from cellar to garret, and their families were maltreated. This brutal treatment of the Venizelist partisans was felt by Sir Francis Elliot to be far more humiliating to the Allies than the withdrawal of the landing parties.

The news of the events in Athens reached London just as the British Government was passing through a political crisis. Mr. Asquith resigned on December 4, and it was not until five days later that Mr. Lloyd George's War Cabinet could assemble to discuss the position. Meanwhile, however, orders were sent to the Vice-Admiral in the Eastern Mediterranean to co-operate with the French in a blockade of Greece; to occupy Syra; to make all necessary arrangements for interrupting railway communications between Athens and Larissa, and for cutting the railway on the Isthmus of Corinth. He was told, however, that no troops were to be landed at the Piraeus. The French at once took measures for relieving Admiral Dartige du Fournet, who left the French fleet some days later, very much regretted by the British officers who had served under him.

When the new War Cabinet assembled for the first time

on December 9, they had before them a telegram from King Constantine to H.M. King George, which cleared the air, in that it gave an absolute assurance that the Greek Government did not intend to make war upon the Entente. Ministers had until then been very uncertain whether the attack on the landing parties was not a first act of open war. But in other respects the telegram was most unsatisfactory. King Constantine alleged that his troops had been obliged to fire: he had "irrefutable proofs" that the Venizelists, "profiting by the Allied landing," intended to "make themselves masters of the town and bring back M. Venizelos in triumph." He went on to say that two automobiles belonging to the Anglo-French Intelligence Service were ready to give the "order for revolt," and that the movement broke out at about three o'clock in the afternoon. He did not say how this, even if true, excused the deliberate concerted attack upon the French seamen four hours previously. H.M. King George answered, in very restrained language, that he could not accept the explanation given, although he was glad to hear that Greece did not contemplate making war upon the Entente. "My Government," the King concluded, "can only take a very serious view of the events resulting in the death of my gallant troops. These events have aroused a feeling of deep and widespread indignation among my people, a feeling intensified by the accounts received from many, including neutral, sources of the treatment to which the Venizelists in Greece are now being subjected. Your Majesty will understand that the demands which, in conjunction with the Allied Powers, my Government must now make, will include reparation for the unprovoked attack made by your troops and guarantees for the future."

When this reply was sent Sir Francis Elliot was instructed at the same time to demand that all Greek troops in northern Greece should be removed to the Morea, and that the evacuation should begin within twenty-four hours; also, all troop movements from the Morea northwards were to be stopped at once. "The blockade of Greece," the instructions ended, "will be maintained until reparation has been made for the recent unprovoked attack by the Greek forces upon the troops of the Allies at Athens, together with satisfactory guarantees for the future." Sir Francis Elliot was further instructed to leave the legation at once, after handing in this ultimatum, and to go on board a ship which the Rear-Admiral was holding ready for him at the Piraeus. Three days later, the British Minister carried out his instructions, and on December 15, the Greek Government sent an envoy to the

s.s. *Abbassiyeh*, in which Sir Francis Elliot was embarked, to deliver a Note accepting the terms of the ultimatum. By December 17 Allied control officers were at work at Larissa and Janina superintending the first movements of the Greek army to the Morea.

## 4

*Submarine Warfare*

In midsummer 1916 the Germans were maintaining fifteen submarines in the Mediterranean. Three of these were stationed at Constantinople, the remaining twelve were at Cattaro. During the last six months of the year the enemy increased these forces to twenty by reinforcements to the Adriatic flotilla. The number of boats which were actually at sea at any one time varied from three to five. The German naval authorities were not slow to realise that submarine operations in the Mediterranean would be less hampered and restricted than operations in any other theatre, by the undertakings given to the American Government in April. The German Government had then promised that no vessel should be sunk without warning and without attempting to save life; their submarine commanders in the Mediterranean frequently felt themselves free to disregard this promise, and they soon learned by experience that the American Government did not intend to hold them to it unless American lives were endangered. In June a U-boat of the Constantinople flotilla sank the armed steamer *Moeris* without warning, off Cape Sidero, in Crete; no protests followed, and in the following month a U-boat off Algiers treated the armed steamer *Euphorbia* in the same way. Again no protests followed. After that the German submarine commanders sank armed steamers without warning whenever they considered the circumstances suitable. It is true that it was only armed vessels which they attacked without signal or summons; this restricted their breach of agreement and kept it within certain limits, but the breach was no less flagrant. The German Government had made its promise subject to only one condition; they would not sink vessels without warning inside or outside the declared war zone unless those vessels attempted to escape or offered resistance. A gun mounted in a freighter's after part suggests that if she is attacked she will probably resist; but actual resistance and potential resistance are not the same thing, and such men as Lieut.-Commander von Arnauld de la Perière,

who was one of the most successful U-boat commanders in the Mediterranean, were well able to distinguish between the two.

The zones of attack varied from week to week; but throughout the German submarine commanders preferred the western to the eastern basin. A severe attack in the Gulfs of Lyons and Genoa was generally followed by another against the Algiers coastal route and the channel between Tunis and Sicily. Both these areas were within the French zone of control, and the French could only do as we were doing in the approach routes to the British islands: vary the tracks that shipping followed, and patrol the terminal points. They were short of patrol craft, and the defence never kept the attack in check; also, as far as we could tell, the line of British drifters across the Otranto Straits seldom impeded the in- or out-going passages of the Cattaro flotilla. In July the attack was extended to the transport route between Sicily and southern Greece, and the approach routes to Salonica were mined at fairly regular intervals. The attack upon the transports was not successful, and the German submarine commanders made the destruction of merchant shipping their principal concern.

On June 9 Arnauld's submarine—*U 35*—was located in the Straits of Otranto, outward bound. He took her up the western coast of Italy and made havoc of shipping in the Gulf of Genoa, and then operated for about a fortnight off the coast of Spain, or on the traffic route between Marseilles and northern France. He carried with him an expert marksman from the High Seas Fleet, and destroyed nearly all the ships he attacked by gunfire. The method was most successful; and when *U 35* returned to Cattaro at the beginning of July, Arnauld had sunk over forty ships, half of them steamers of heavy tonnage. He was succeeded in July by Walther Forstmann in *U 39*, who operated with telling effect off the northern coast of Algeria between the 12th and the 25th, while a smaller boat, presumably from the Austrian submarine flotillas, took station between Malta and Greece and attacked shipping on the eastern route. Arnauld made his most destructive cruise in the month of August. He started out towards the end of July, and went back to his old hunting grounds, between the north-eastern coast of Spain and the Gulf of Genoa. In three weeks he sank about fifty steamers, with a total tonnage of 76,500, and gained the extraordinary distinction of having destroyed two-thirds of the tonnage sunk in every theatre of war during the month of August, and of having done this enormous amount of damage with a single four-inch gun. He

was succeeded towards the end of the month by Max Valen-tiner in *U 38*, who took a heavy toll of shipping between the Balearic Islands and Spain. The losses were most felt by British and Italian shipping, and during August the French redistributed their patrol forces along the Algerian coast; but this reorganisation of the defence forces did not check the losses.

The reinforcements sent out from Germany seem to have reached the Mediterranean during the last three months of the year, and the number of operating submarines increased. During September, three large U-boats were located at work at the same time, whilst one or more boats of a smaller type operated in the eastern basin. In October the number rose slightly, and during December the French Intelligence Department identified six separate cruises by large U-boats, and three by vessels of a smaller type. The losses rose proportionately, and to the British Government they were particularly serious; vessels under the British flag in the Mediterranean are generally steamers of considerable size, and though as a rule more Italian than British ships were lost during any given month, a heavy proportion of the total loss of carrying power was borne by British tonnage.

The most serious feature of the position was that in the Mediterranean, as at home, the losses showed a distinct increase during the last two months of the year, and the German submarines were operating with relative immunity. From June to the end of the year only three German submarines were lost in the Mediterranean area, and on July 30 the drifters on the Otranto barrage were responsible for sinking the German submarine—*UB 44*—which was known to have been destroyed by our anti-submarine forces. In contrast to the rising list of shipping losses, the list of U-boat destructions showed a tendency to decline. Everything, indeed, seemed to show that our seaborne traffic was threatened by what might prove to be a danger of the first order.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Allied losses in the Mediterranean during the last six months of the year were:

British, 96 vessels, 415,471 tons; French, 24 vessels, 64,829 tons; Italian, 136 vessels, 181,831 tons. Total 256 vessels, 662,131 tons. The British loss was therefore 62 per cent. of the total tonnage, and 32 per cent. of the total number of ships.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE RAIDERS

#### 1

##### *The Moewe*

LATE in the autumn of 1916, the German High Command decided upon a plan for attacking our trade routes in the outer oceans with surface raiders. The enterprise was timed to start from two months to a month before the beginning of unrestricted submarine warfare, and was probably designed as a preliminary to that desperate venture. If so, the plan of combining a cruiser attack upon the outer routes with the submarine onslaught upon the approach routes in home waters was, in itself, a good one. A raiding cruiser which shifts its ground continually and creates uncertainty in distant ports of shipment may compel unwieldy concentrations of cruiser forces which must become wholly absorbed in watching focal points and carrying out sweeps and searches. If the three German raiders selected for this service were able to keep up a continuous attack upon our communications in the Atlantic, Pacific and Indian Oceans, they had good reason to hope that cruiser forces, which would otherwise be employed in convoying and protecting shipping in the Atlantic and waters near the British Isles, would be pinned to distant points in these outer seas.

In this country it had been realised for months past that the Germans might do great mischief if they could devise and carry out an efficient plan for raiding the distant trade routes; and the Admiralty and Admiral Jellicoe had taken elaborate precautions to meet the danger. Cruiser forces were under standing orders to take up patrol stations in all the exits to the North Sea as soon as we should have knowledge that a raider was out; and their stations were altered in accordance with our latest intelligence.<sup>1</sup> The German raiders nevertheless eluded us at the start, but this was only because we never knew within seven days the actual date of their sailing: each of them, in fact, contrived

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix A and Map 14.

to get to sea without any information of their departure reaching the British Admiralty; and it was that which saved them.

The problem had been carefully considered not only by the central authorities but by the commanders of our cruiser squadrons on the outer routes. On September 22, 1916, Rear-Admiral Sydney Fremantle took command of the 9th Cruiser Squadron in succession to Vice-Admiral Sir Archibald Moore. He had under his command the cruiser *King Alfred* (flag), the old battleship *Swiftsure*, the cruisers *Donegal* and *Sutlej*, and the armed merchant cruisers *Ophir* and *Avenger*. By the original war orders the area under his control lay between the latitudes of St. Vincent, Cape Verde Islands, and the 44th parallel, and between the meridian of 40° W. and the African coast. Inside this zone an area had been allotted to the French 6<sup>e</sup> *escadre légère* under Rear-Admiral Jaurès, the western and northern boundaries of which were longitude 20° W. and latitude 30° N.<sup>1</sup> This disposition dated from the early days of the war, when the German light cruisers were still abroad and operating on the trade routes; in August 1916 the Admiralty considered that such rigid limits of command were no longer necessary, and wrote to the Admiral Commanding to tell him that "the 9th Cruiser Squadron is stationed in the Atlantic for service against the enemy as required. It is neither desirable nor possible to lay down limits to the area in which it may be called upon to operate. . . . It is not an isolated squadron operating by itself as a self-contained unit; but it is a collection of vessels maintained as a strategical reserve for reinforcing and emergency purposes."

To the south of the 9th Cruiser Squadron were the cruiser *Highflyer* and the armed merchant cruiser *Marmora*; and, further south again, patrolling off the south-east coast of America, were the light cruisers *Glasgow* and *Amethyst*, and the armed merchant cruisers *Macedonia*, *Orama* and *Edinburgh Castle*.

Since March the operations of the 9th Cruiser Squadron had been much assisted by the Portuguese declaration of war against Germany; in consequence of which our cruisers were free to make unrestricted use of the harbour facilities at Funchal and the Cape Verde Islands. But in another respect our difficulties had increased. The cruise of *U 53* to the western side of the Atlantic had proved that Madeira, the Cape Verde Islands and the Canaries were all within

<sup>1</sup> The sixième *escadre légère* consisted of *Kleber* (flag), *Desaix* and *Dupleix*: its base of operations was Dakar.

the zone of action of the German submarines of the new type. The open roadsteads of Funchal and Porto Praya were therefore no longer suitable as war anchorages or coaling stations, and the headquarters of the squadron was now Sierra Leone.

On taking over the command Admiral Fremantle issued a set of war orders, describing generally the scope of his operations, the measures to be taken against raiders, and the special precautions to be adopted if submarines attacked the area. Under the first head he proposed to arrange for his ships to make passages through zones where shipping was thickest "to demonstrate our command of the sea, and our intention to enforce our rights, to neutral trade." In order to carry this out, he intended never to have more than two ships at the base at one time; to keep a ship in the Azores continuously; and to see to it that the African coast north of latitude 30° N. was frequently visited.

With regard to the second head, of special precautions, careful consideration seemed to show that a raiding cruiser's best plan of operation would be to attack trade near the Canary Islands, and to use as a coaling station some deserted anchorage on the African coast. In that event, Admiral Fremantle decided that his endeavour "would be to organise a sweep, or a series of sweeps, on a broad front in such a direction as to afford the best opportunity of finding the enemy while he is cruising to attack trade," and he proposed that the French squadron should co-operate on the eastern wing of the advance. If the enemy should raid the trade routes with a battle cruiser, the 9th Cruiser Squadron would either act as a scout line for the battle cruisers sent out from England, or, if none could be spared, keep concentrated and "seek out the enemy with a view to making him burn coal and preventing him from doing damage." Admiral Fremantle also took the precaution to add, that, if faced with a battle cruiser raid, he did not intend to accept action unless the circumstances were decidedly favourable.

During October he visited the African coast to see how far it would afford facilities to enemy submarines operating against the trade routes to the westward. He found that, though the French were keeping a trawler patrol at work off the Moroccan coast, the Spanish Government had no means of making their neutrality respected in the Spanish zone further south. Having visited the Cape Verde Islands in the last part of the month, Admiral Fremantle went on to Dakar to confer with Admiral Jaurès. He arrived on November 4: three days later a conference of the two

staffs was held, to make arrangements for common action against raiders or submarines. Admiral Fremantle continued to receive reports that enemy submarines intended to attack his zone. On November 22, therefore, when the whole squadron had assembled in Sierra Leone, he took the opportunity of discussing the problem of submarine attack with the military and civil authorities. He found that nobody had seriously considered what ought to be done if Sierra Leone were attacked, and a set of emergency orders was accordingly drawn up.

Events soon showed the wisdom of Admiral Fremantle's preparations. Ever since his return home in March 1916,<sup>1</sup> Count Nikolaus zu Dohna Schlodien had retained his command of the *Moewe*; and on November 22 he slipped out into the North Sea for a new raid against British commerce. In his account he does not quote his orders, but says simply that he preserved the utmost secrecy about his departure. On this occasion he was not acting by himself. The *Moewe* was followed, about a week later, by the *Wolf*, commanded by Captain Nerger, who had orders to operate in the Indian Ocean; whilst on December 21 Count von Luckner left in the ship *Seeadler* for an attack on the Pacific routes. The *Moewe* was the first to begin active operations and she was the first of the raiders of whom we had news.

Count zu Dohna's earlier movements cannot be traced with any accuracy, but it seems fairly certain that he made his way along the eastern side of the North Sea in very bad weather and turned west when in or about the latitude of the Faroes. By November 30 he had set his course to the south; two days later he made his first capture, the British cold-storage vessel *Voltaire*, which was then on a voyage to America in ballast. The position was latitude  $41^{\circ} 43' N.$ , longitude  $36^{\circ} 48' W.$ , that is, he was roughly half-way across the great circle track between Cape Clear (S.W. Ireland) and Cape Race (Newfoundland); and it was only by a piece of exceptional luck that the *Moewe* was not at once reported. The *Voltaire* had an old gun mounted aft, and Count zu Dohna had to use his own armament very freely before he could get her captain to strike. No sooner was the fight over, and the *Voltaire* left sinking, than a Dutch vessel, whose captain must certainly have heard the firing, steamed past and asked, by signal, whether the *Moewe* had taken up the crew of the sinking steamer. Why the Dutch captain made no further report of the incident has always remained completely unknown.

<sup>1</sup> See Vol. III., pp. 267-70.

Count zu Dohna determined to direct his first operations against the North American trade route, and so held his position for the next few days. He captured nothing during December 3, and on December 4 he had an unforeseen misfortune ; he brought to and examined a vessel which proved to be the Belgian relief ship *Samland*. As she had a safe-conduct from the German Embassy in New York, after destroying her wireless installation, he let her go, and this meant that he could only keep his operations secret for some three or four more days. He had gained a much longer start than this on his first voyage ; but he realised that even now it would take some time after the alarm was given to organise a search. He therefore decided that he could remain on the North Atlantic track for some days longer without risk, and between the 6th and the 12th he steered on a west-south-westerly course diagonally across the great circle tracks between New England and the Lizard, capturing five British steamers as he went.<sup>1</sup> Of these he sank three, but kept the *Yarrowdale* and the *St. Theodore*. At last, on December 9, he heard the Bermuda wireless station warning all vessels within call that there was a raider in the North Atlantic. Even then he was reluctant to abandon the North Atlantic routes ; and in the meanwhile our counter-measures were being pressed forward.<sup>2</sup>

The Admiralty received the *Samland's* report on the 7th, and at once informed Paris and all the responsible officers in the Atlantic. Troop transports at the Cape, Dakar and Sierra Leone were ordered to remain in harbour until further orders ; and the five transports which were known to be at sea were ordered back to Sierra Leone.<sup>3</sup> There was a general resemblance between the latest description of the raider and those which had come in when she was at sea during the early months of the year, but not yet enough to establish her identity. All the Admiralty could say with certainty was, that the new raider had a short, broad funnel, and two rakish masts, and that her armament consisted of one 6-inch, two 4·7-inch and two 3-inch guns and four torpedo tubes.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The *Cambrian Range*, 4,234 tons, grain and piece goods; the *King George*, 3,852 tons, munitions; the *Georgic*, 10,077 tons, general cargo; the *Yarrowdale*, 4,652 tons, munitions; and the *St. Theodore*, 4,992 tons, coal.

<sup>2</sup> See Map 8.

<sup>3</sup> The *Borda*, *City of Sparta*, *Durham Castle*, *Willochra* and *Tofna*.

<sup>4</sup> The calibres were necessarily approximate, as they were the guesses of a Belgian merchant captain.

At the moment when these reports came in, our forces in the North Atlantic were disposed as follows :—

#### NORTH AMERICA AND WEST INDIES

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <i>Leviathan</i> : Kingston, Jamaica.  | <i>Roxburgh</i> : on passage to Bermuda,<br>from Jamaica. |
| <i>Carnarvon</i> : at sea off Bermuda. | <i>Antrim</i> : Bermuda.                                  |
| <i>Isis</i> : Halifax.                 | <i>Calgarian</i> : Halifax.                               |
| <i>Cæsar</i> : Bermuda, guardship.     | <i>Devonshire</i> : Halifax.                              |
| <i>Berwick</i> : Kingston, Jamaica.    | <i>Drake</i> : at sea, Bermuda to Trinidad.               |
| <i>Laurentic</i> : Liverpool, in dock. |   |

#### NINTH CRUISER SQUADRON

|                                |  |
|--------------------------------|--|
| <i>King Alfred</i> : Freetown. | <i>Swiftsure</i> : Sierra Leone.             |
| <i>Aphir</i> : Sierra Leone.   | <i>Donegal</i> : Dakar.                      |
| <i>Sutlej</i> : Gibraltar.     | <i>Orotava</i> : on passage to Sierra Leone. |

#### CRUISER FORCE "I" (CAPE VERDE ISLANDS)

*Highflyer* : Sierra Leone.  
*Marmora* : patrolling between Bathurst and the Cape Verde Islands.

#### EAST COAST OF SOUTH AMERICA

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <i>Glasgow</i> : Cape Town.             | <i>Macedonia</i> : on passage, Abrolhos<br>Rocks to Pernambuco. |
| <i>Amethyst</i> : Vicosa Reef.          |   |
| <i>Edinburgh Castle</i> : at the Plate. | <i>Orama</i> : Abrolhos Rocks.                                  |

Having only recently worked out his plans for meeting the very emergency that had now arisen, Admiral Fremantle at once took action, and ordered his cruisers to sweep along the trade route towards Madeira and the Josephine Bank, with Admiral Jaurès and his cruisers on their right flank. A few hours after they had got to sea, an Admiralty telegram arrived telling him to "suspend action." The Admiralty had, in fact, worked out a plan for a co-ordinated search by our Atlantic squadrons. The outline of this was as follows.

On the western side of the Atlantic, Vice-Admiral M. E. Browning, commanding the North American and West Indies Station, was to distribute his force over four lines of search : (i) in the north, the *Devonshire* and *Calgarian* were to sweep along the main trade route to longitude 50° W.; (ii) the *Leviathan*, *Antrim* and *Carnarvon* were to spread on a line of search joining Bermuda to the Azores, until they reached the 45th meridian; (iii) the *Roxburgh* and *Berwick* were to watch the Mona passage, and (iv) the *Drake*, which had been cruising in the West Indies, was to sweep on a line between Trinidad and the Azores as far as latitude 25° N. In addition to this, the French Admiral in the West Indies was asked to send two cruisers along the northern coast of Brazil to search for secret coaling places, such as Maraca Island,

which the *Moewe* had used as a base during her previous voyage.<sup>1</sup>

The dispositions for the other squadrons in the Atlantic were based upon our arrangements for diverting traffic from its ordinary routes; with regard to which a word of explanation is necessary. Soon after the *Moewe's* first raid the Admiralty had drawn up a plan for diverting the Cape shipping to four tracks, two to the eastward and two to the westward, of the main route; and of sending the Plate trade along two lanes which passed 200 and 600 miles eastward of St. Paul Rocks. The main object of these artificially-created routes was, of course, to break up the concentrations of shipping which ordinarily occur at such nodal points as the Rocas and the Canaries. They were not to be rigidly adhered to, but to be used as a general guide. Intelligence officers abroad were to vary the route instructions as they thought fit, so long as they contrived to keep the normal routes as deserted as possible, and saw to it that no two ships, sailing within a few days of one another, followed the same track. Admiral Fremantle was therefore ordered to assemble his ships in latitude 10° N. longitude 27° W., and sweep up the traffic lane to the west of St. Vincent; whilst the French patrolled the area to the east of the 30th meridian between parallels of 8° and 14° N. The *Sutlej*, which was just completing her refit at Gibraltar, was directed to make for Sierra Leone down the traffic lane which Admiral Fremantle's ships were about to search. The *Highflyer* was to remain at Sierra Leone; whilst the *Marmora*, and the *Kent* from the Cape Station, convoyed the homeward-bound transports.<sup>2</sup>

In the Southern Atlantic measures were taken on the same principle. The *Amethyst* was to remain near Abrolhos Rocks to protect the colliers; the *Edinburgh Castle* was to protect the shipping at the River Plate; whilst the *Macedonia* and *Orama* were directed to sweep up the traffic lane to the east of Fernando Noronha. The *Glasgow* was at Cape Town refitting and could not be included in the dispositions.

<sup>1</sup> The *Weymouth* was ordered out from home to reinforce him; she arrived at Bermuda on December 22, and had at once to go into dock. She took no part in the sweep.

<sup>2</sup> The *Gloucestershire*, *Almanzora*, *Orcoma*, *Arlanza* (10th Cruiser Squadron) were ordered out from home to reinforce him. The *Almanzora*, *Orcoma* and *Arlanza* arrived at Sierra Leone on January 4, and the *Gloucestershire* on the 8th and took no part in the sweep. The *Arlanza* and the *Almanzora* returned home on January 14: the other two vessels remained on the station as escorts for the transports on the Cape route. They took no part in the operations against the raider.

Carefully as these measures were thought out, they were fruitless. They left a gap between the eastern ends of the sweeps ordered for Admiral Browning's squadron and the western limit of Admiral Fremantle's line of search, and it was exactly down this gap that Count zu Dohna directed his course.

On December 12 he transferred about 400 prisoners to the *Yarrowdale* and ordered Lieutenant Badewitz to return with them to Germany. The vessels parted company on the following day and the *Yarrowdale* arrived safely in Germany on December 31. By the capture of the *St. Theodore* Count zu Dohna had made up a stock of 7,000 tons of coal. He parted from her almost at once, after putting her in charge of a prize crew; but gave her a rendezvous at which to meet him. As we have seen, the *Moewe*'s course down the mid-Atlantic took her clear of Admiral Fremantle's and Admiral Browning's cruisers; but it also took her down a very deserted part of the Atlantic. The result was, that from December 12 to December 26 she only captured the *Dramatist*, an English steamer laden with Californian fruit, and the *Nantes*, a French sailing vessel.

Having met the *St. Theodore* at the rendezvous on the 23rd, Count zu Dohna decided to arm her and send her on an independent cruise under the charge of Sub-Lieutenant Köhler. From December 23 to 28 the work of converting the *St. Theodore* went on in mid-ocean. She was successfully fitted with a wireless apparatus and armed; and when the work was finished the Count headed for the South American route at full speed. He was, in fact, making for the Roca-Fernando-Noronha area, where he operated, off and on, for the next six weeks. That he should have been able to do so almost without hindrance is truly remarkable. In view of the success with which the *Karlsruhe* had operated in this zone two years before, and of its attraction for the *Moewe* a year ago, we had every reason to guard it, and, indeed, almost throughout the raid our cruisers were patrolling it. Nor was this all; such reports as we could get of the *Moewe*'s movements all tended to show that she was working in that area, so that our vigilance at the vital spot was redoubled. In spite of all this the *Moewe* remained at sea for as long as her coal and provisions held out and returned to harbour at her commander's convenience. Facts so surprising at first sight deserve to be closely investigated.

The Admiralty's dispositions had allotted the Fernando-Noronha-Rocas zone, which Count zu Dohna was now approaching, to the *Macedonia* and *Orama*. When the

orders were sent out the *Macedonia* was on her way to Pernambuco, and the *Orama* was at the Abrolhos anchorage; both vessels, therefore, had time to get into the Fernando Noronha zone before the *Moewe*. They were actually in the area by the 16th, and at once began to work along the trade route between the Equator and latitude 5° S. The Count was still in the Northern Atlantic, and, though his southerly course carried him clear of the *Drake*, it none the less took him into an area which we now held strongly. He was, therefore, standing directly into danger; and it might have been thought that his destruction was a mere matter of time.

On December 25 the *King Alfred*, *Swiftsure*, *Donegal* and *Sutlej* finished their sweep and returned to harbour. Three days later, Admiral Fremantle was relieved by Rear-Admiral T. D. L. Sheppard, who at once wired home a fresh scheme of search.<sup>1</sup> The Admiralty did not approve it, and they sent out new orders on December 30. They had evidently made up their minds that it was a mere waste of coal and machinery to search for the raider on such vague data, and their main preoccupation was to hold the vital point at Fernando Noronha as strongly as possible. The *King Alfred*, *Swiftsure* and *Sutlej* were ordered to remain concentrated at Sierra Leone; whilst the *Donegal* and *Orotava*, accompanied by two colliers fitted with wireless telegraphy, swept down the trade route and relieved the *Macedonia* and *Orama* at Fernando Noronha. These vessels were then to move south and reinforce the *Edinburgh Castle* off the Plate; Trinidad was to be examined on the way.

The new dispositions therefore covered the vital point quite as effectively as the old; but as it was always possible that the raider would slip past our patrols, and work in the South Atlantic from some base in the Patagonian archipelago, there was another point to be considered. The high-power wireless station at the Falklands was exposed to an attack from the sea, and could even be put out of action by indirect fire from Berkeley Sound; so that, if it were to be protected, a ship would have to be permanently stationed there until the raid was over or until some kind of local defence had been erected. On January 4, therefore, orders were sent to the *Lancaster*—one of our Pacific cruisers, which was at the time at Port Stanley—to land two of her 6-inch guns. The work, which was very difficult, was not completed until a month later.

<sup>1</sup> Admiral Fremantle had been appointed to the command of the 2nd Cruiser Squadron, Grand Fleet.

From December 28 to New Year's Day Count zu Dohna held on south towards our cruisers, steadily increasing his danger. He hoped to pick up some of the grain and meat cargoes, and so from the 1st to the 5th of January steamed slowly southwards at about eight knots. His search for meat and grain ships from the Plate was not successful, and it very nearly brought him into contact with our cruisers. Between the 1st and the 5th the *Orama*, the *Macedonia* and the *Amethyst* were sweeping north-eastwards from Fernando Noronha.<sup>1</sup> They crossed Count zu Dohna's line of advance on the 2nd and 3rd and when they turned south-westwards on the 4th, he was well to the south of them. He was therefore undisturbed, and only made two small captures, a four-masted French schooner and the Japanese steamer *Hudson Maru*; on the 6th he turned further to the south to a course which converged with the line patrolled by the three British cruisers. They were now catching him up and were sweeping towards the coast, with the colliers *Daleham* and *Minieh* in company; these vessels, being fitted with wireless telegraphy, were stationed ahead to extend the zone of search. The course of the squadron was now converging rapidly with the *Moewe's*; but the Count was quite unaware that he was standing into danger.

Late on the 7th the British steamer *Radnorshire* was captured and sunk by the *Moewe* about 280 miles to the south-westward of our three cruisers, and some time next day the Count swung his vessel round and steered in a direction which took him straight to the *Amethyst*. When he did this our ships were rather widely spread. At a quarter-past six on the evening of the same day the squadron had closed, and the *Macedonia*, after taking all the mails on board, steered towards Pernambuco. The *Orama* went straight on with the *Daleham* in company; the *Amethyst* and the *Minieh* remained behind to coal. They finished coaling during the afternoon of the following day and the *Minieh* was then sent on ahead, and told to steer for the rendezvous at six knots. Her captain was told that the *Amethyst* would be twenty miles astern, and he was ordered to report suspicious vessels by wireless telegraphy. On the morning of the 9th the *Amethyst* increased speed and sighted the *Minieh* at six o'clock, about eight miles away, bearing three points on the starboard bow. After this the two vessels were out of sight of each other all day; just before dark the captain of the *Amethyst* saw smoke coming from the direction where the *Minieh* was supposed to be; and as he had received no wireless message

<sup>1</sup> See Map 9.

from the collier, reporting a suspicious vessel, he concluded that everything was in order and did not steam forward to sight her before dark.

In the meantime, late in the afternoon, Captain Williams of the *Minieh* had sighted smoke ahead; but being under orders only to report suspicious vessels, he refrained for the moment from sending out any message.<sup>1</sup> For the next hour the strange vessel and the *Minieh* closed, and at five o'clock the new-comer, when she was only half a mile away, suddenly hoisted the German ensign, made a signal to the *Minieh* to stop using wireless and swung out her guns. Captain Williams told the operator to disregard the order from the raider; to signal "What ship is that?" and to make the S.O.S. It is impossible to be sure whether the operator really attempted to make these signals or not. This much is certain: nothing was heard in the *Amethyst's* wireless room, and in a few moments all chance of sending out a message from the *Minieh* was at an end, as the *Moewe's* boarding officer came over her side with an armed party.<sup>2</sup>

Captain Williams did what he could to disguise the real position, and to keep Count zu Dohna ignorant of his danger; but the facts were too obvious to be kept dark for long. Whilst the Germans were ransacking the ship they came upon the chief officer's log, which showed them that the *Minieh* was the auxiliary to a squadron of cruisers. Put thoroughly on his guard by this discovery, Count zu Dohna sank the *Minieh* at about nine o'clock, two hours after sunset, and steamed off to the eastward. He was away in time. Shortly after dark Captain the Earl of Glasgow, in the *Amethyst*, increased speed, intending to close the *Minieh* during the night and go with her in company to the rendezvous next morning. But when day dawned on the 10th, the collier was nowhere to be seen. Count zu Dohna, after bringing off his amazing stroke, was also out of sight, making off eastwards towards the secret trade route.

Captain Lord Glasgow steamed south towards the rendez-

<sup>1</sup> The line under patrol was to the west of the secret track along which shipping was being diverted. The object of the patrol was to intercept the raider "if he tried to proceed easterly or westerly off the trade routes to coal": all vessels steaming at right angles to the track of the patrol were presumably deemed suspicious and interrogated.

<sup>2</sup> The naval authorities maintained that the wireless operator could not have done so, because none of our cruisers heard anything at all, and the wireless rooms in our ships would most certainly have been aware that jamming was going on. The contention is not a strong one, as the *Moewe* undoubtedly jammed a great many S.O.S. calls sent out by merchant ships in the Rocas area, just before they were captured, and none of our cruisers picked up any sign either of signalling or of jamming.

vous all day, puzzled that the *Minieh* was not sighted, but still not suspecting what had happened. When he met the *Orama* and the *Daleham* and found that they too had seen nothing of the *Minieh*, he at once started a search. The three ships were joined by the *Macedonia* on the 11th, and the sweep was kept up until the 13th. It was then realised that the collier was lost—snatched almost from under her consort's wing; the *Amethyst* parted company and made for Bahia; the *Macedonia* and *Orama* swept towards Trinidad, to carry out the Admiralty orders of the 30th, and then moved south for the Plate.

After sinking the *Minieh*, the Count decided to leave the Rocas area altogether. The *Hudson Maru* was loaded up with prisoners on the 10th, and sent to Pernambuco; after which the *Moewe* held on to the eastward across the Central Atlantic. Count zu Dohna met the *St. Theodore*, which had been christened the *Geier*, on the 17th, and learned that her cruise had been very unproductive. Since the two ships had parted company, Sub-Lieutenant Köhler had only captured one small Canadian vessel. During the 18th and 19th the *Moewe* took in coal from the *Geier*, after which the two ships again separated and the *Moewe* held on to the eastward. From January 22 to February 2 she cruised on the Cape route between the latitudes of 15° S. and 30° S.

In the meantime the dispositions ordered by the Admiralty on December 30 were being put into effect. Their general purpose was to move the cruisers under Commodore Aubrey Smith, Senior Naval Officer, East Coast of South America, further south, and to transfer the patrol of the Rocas-Fernando-Noronha area to ships detached especially from the 9th Cruiser Squadron. The *Orotava* and *Donegal*, which had been ordered south, left Sierra Leone on January 5 and 6, 1917, respectively, and on the 15th arrived off the Rocas. The *Moewe* appears to have been somewhere to the south of them as they approached the Rocas; but, though not far off, she was never sighted nor in any real danger from them. The two cruisers made a sweep towards Lavandeira Reef, which they reached on the 16th. On the 21st, having coaled with the utmost difficulty, they sailed again and swept to the eastward. The *Donegal* soon developed serious engine-room defects; and, on the 23rd, her commanding officer, Captain d'Oyley ordered the *Orotava* to patrol near Fernando Noronha, with the collier *Albistan*, whilst he returned to Sierra Leone with the *Pretoria*. At the moment, Commodore Aubrey Smith was returning to his station in the *Glasgow*, which had been laid up at Cape Town for a refit, and was on

his way to Abrolhos Rocks. Realising that this meant a reinforcement to the station, Captain d'Oyley asked the commodore to support the *Orotava* with an additional cruiser. This the commodore could not do, but knowing that the *Orotava* was running short of water, he wired to her to go to Pernambuco to get it. The message never got through, and she left the patrol for Sierra Leone on the 30th. Thus for the first time since the operation began the Rocas area was temporarily uncovered. The gap in our dispositions did not, however, give the *Moewe* any additional facilities; for she was, all the time, at the other side of the Atlantic; and Commodore Aubrey Smith soon had the area under observation again. The arrival of the *Macedonia* and the *Orama* off the Plate released the *Edinburgh Castle*, which moved up to Abrolhos Rocks. Here she found the *Amethyst*, and was joined later by the commodore himself in the *Glasgow*, which, after calling at Pernambuco on the 19th, arrived on the 22nd at Abrolhos Rocks. On the 24th all three vessels got under way again, and swept north; the *Amethyst* parted company on February 1, and returned to watch the base at Abrolhos Rocks; but the *Glasgow* and the *Edinburgh Castle* held on and reached the Fernando Noronha area just as the *Orotava* was returning to Sierra Leone.

The prisoners from the *Hudson Maru* had been landed at Pernambuco. From them we got a better description of the raider, and a practical certainty that she intended to operate on the Plate route against the meat and grain vessels. We knew, moreover, from the reported conversations between the prisoners and their German captors, that the captain of the *Moewe* was quite baffled at finding none of the cargoes for which he was seeking. Our system of secret routes was therefore working well. The information thus received was not, however, enough to alter the existing dispositions, more particularly as the area in which the *Moewe* was supposed to be operating was already being closely watched.

On February 2 Count zu Dohna left his position on the Cape route, and steered for his old zone of operations off the Brazilian coast; a day later, Commodore Aubrey Smith, in the *Glasgow*, and Captain Marshall, in the *Edinburgh Castle*, having finished their northerly sweep, turned southwards, and made for Abrolhos Rocks, which they reached on the 10th. The hunters were, therefore, well placed for running down the quarry, although for the time being the scent was lost. The *Moewe* was, in fact, still many hundreds of miles away. After leaving the Cape route, where he had found absolutely nothing, the Count steamed towards Trinidad in the South

Atlantic. On February 11, he fell in with the *Geier*, and learned that she had only sunk one vessel since she had last parted company; the two vessels then steamed on towards the island where they intended to coal. Ostensibly no better spot could have been chosen. The compiler of the Admiralty Sailing Directions for the South American coast describes the isolation of this lonely rock with scientific precision: "It is a rugged mass of rocks, the centre peak rising 1,952 feet and what soil there is on the island is on the eastern and southern sides . . . the whole shore is so ironbound, and there is such a swell surging against it that it is almost impossible to land anywhere without danger of staving the boat . . . the shore is skirted by sharp rugged coral rocks. . . . The island was taken possession of by Dr. Halley, afterwards Astronomer Royal on April 17, 1700, and in 1781 the English tried to form a settlement and failed; and, more recently, the Brazilians, with like success." This certainly conveys loneliness and desolation, and the Count approached the island in full confidence that his coaling would only be watched by "sea eagles, man-of-war birds and boobies." He found to his dismay that the shores were covered with bungalows and bathing machines; after an anxious stay of a few hours, at an anchorage which, he hoped, was not visible from the settlement, he again made off to sea. On the 15th the *Moewe* was about 300 miles east-south-east of Abrolhos Rocks, having sunk her consort the *Geier* on the previous day.

For a second time the Count was standing into danger. On the 12th the *Glasgow* had left Abrolhos Rocks and sailed for Rio, leaving the *Amethyst* and the *Edinburgh Castle* in the area, and the *Orama* to the south of it.<sup>1</sup> As the Abrolhos Rocks and the Vicoso Reef were the coaling bases of the squadron, they could not be left unguarded, and the *Amethyst* remained at anchor near the Vicoso Reef for the rest of the month. The *Edinburgh Castle*, which, as has been shown, joined her there from the Rocas area on the 9th, remained at anchor until the 14th. She then weighed and made for the secret trade route to the eastward, with the colliers *Headcliffe* and *Dunclutha* in company, on a course which took her almost straight for the *Moewe*.

After sinking the *Geier* on the 14th, the *Moewe* took up

<sup>1</sup> The *Glasgow's* movements since the first alarm were: December 7 to 27 at Simonstown, refitting; December 27 to January 3 on passage to St. Helena; January 4 to 10 on passage to Sierra Leone; January 13 to 19 on passage to Pernambuco; January 20 to 22 on passage to the Abrolhos; January 23 to February 7 patrolling between Abrolhos and the Rocas; February 7 to 8 at Bahia; February 8 to 10 on passage to Vicoso Reef. The *Macedonia* was patrolling off the Plate.

a station on the 20th parallel about three hundred and sixty miles from the continent. The Count had at last got on to the route to which the Plate trade had been diverted, and he soon became aware of it. The new hunting-ground was more productive than any he had been on for several weeks past, and he at once began to make captures.<sup>1</sup> Count zu Dohna rose early on the morning of the 16th to superintend the capture and sinking of the *Eddie*; and a few minutes later the raider was in touch with the *Edinburgh Castle* and her colliers. But here again the luck was against us; for it so happened that, when Count zu Dohna sighted our ships, they were carrying out a special evolution, so that their movements at once roused his suspicions. Unaware of the raider's presence, Captain Marshall of the *Edinburgh Castle* had stopped his engines at 8.15 and sent a whaler with fresh provisions towards the *Headcliffe* and *Dunclutha*, whose masters closed him. When the Count sighted them, therefore, he saw a large two-funnelled vessel completely stopped, and another moving across his bows. Concluding at once that he was in face of a trap, and that the moving vessel was a decoy, he approached cautiously. His suspicions were confirmed when he saw signals going up from the *Headcliffe*, and he at once made off at the top of his speed. Probably because he had issued strict standing orders to make as little smoke as possible, our ships did not sight the *Moewe* until half-past ten, when she was reported to the eastward from the masthead of the collier *Headcliffe*. At the moment she was barely visible, so that there was nothing to cause suspicion of her; but when the *Edinburgh Castle* moved towards her, she was seen to swing round sixteen points and make off to the north-eastwards at high speed. Captain Marshall grasped the position in an instant and steamed after her in chase. The *Moewe* had a start of anything up to twelve miles, and it was soon evident that the *Edinburgh Castle* would never overtake her. Up to noon our ship held her own; but, with her bottom foul, and her engines in need of an overhaul, she never quite worked up to 14 knots. By one o'clock the raider was drawing ahead, and at 2.40 Captain Marshall gave up the chase and turned to starboard to examine the s.s. *Hermione* of Liverpool, which was approaching from the north-eastward.<sup>2</sup> This was the

<sup>1</sup> On the 15th, s.s. *Brecknockshire*; on the night of the 15th-16th, the French *Prince*; and on the morning of the 16th, s.s. *Eddie*.

<sup>2</sup> Captain Marshall's movement towards the *Hermione* was quite misunderstood by Count zu Dohna, who thought the *Hermione* was mistaken for the *Moewe*.

last that was seen of the *Moewe*. When Commodore Aubrey Smith received the news, the *Glasgow* was patrolling the Plate route about 300 miles to the south of Abrolhos Rocks; the *Macedonia* and the *Orama* were off the Plate; and the *Amethyst* was guarding the base at the Vicoso Reef. Thinking, from the course the raider had taken, that she was making for the Plate, the commodore decided to move south in the *Glasgow*, and to send the *Orama* north up the traffic lane. But in point of fact Count zu Dohna was now nearing the end of his resources and was making northwards for home.

He kept well out into the middle of the Atlantic, and sank six more British steamers on his way back.<sup>1</sup> During the first days of March the Count took his ship through the western edge of Admiral Sheppard's zone, but he was never in any danger from our cruisers. Neither the Admiralty nor the Admiral had had any news of the *Moewe*'s movements since February 16, and no special movements were made until March 9, when Admiral Sheppard left Sierra Leone with the *King Alfred* and *Sutlej* to sweep towards Ascension. All the other ships of his squadron were engaged in convoying transports; for all drafts and stores between Australia or East Africa and England were now sent round the Cape. In the south, Commodore Aubrey Smith had divided his force into two groups: one he kept off the Plate; with the other he set up a patrol of the secret trade route between latitude 25° S. and the Equator. But these movements had no effect upon the *Moewe*'s operations, which were practically at an end: when Admiral Sheppard began his sweep on the 12th, Count zu Dohna was somewhere in the latitude of Lisbon running for home.

## 2

*The Leopard*

The German Admiralty had evidently decided that the attack upon the outer routes ought to be maintained; for, just before the *Moewe*'s return home (March 22) another raider put to sea. The new raider was the British steamer *Yarrowdale*, captured by the *Moewe* on her last voyage, and now fitted with an armament of about a dozen guns

<sup>1</sup> The *Katherine* (2,926 tons), the *Rhodanthe* (3,061 tons), the *Esmeralda* (4,678 tons), the *Otaki* (9,575 tons), the *Demeteron* (6,048 tons), the *Governor* (5,524 tons).

and two torpedo tubes : we do not know the name of her captain or what his orders were.

The Admiralty had a certain amount of information as to the enemy's intentions, and had ordered the Commander-in-Chief to strengthen the Northern Patrol (10th Cruiser Squadron) and to keep a watch on the Norwegian coast. Admiral Beatty at once sent two cruisers and two armed boarding steamers to patrol to the north of the Shetlands along the meridian of  $1^{\circ}$  W., and detached the 4th Light Cruiser Squadron with four destroyers to watch the Norwegian coast between the Nord Fiord and the Sogne Fiord. Both groups returned on the 14th, having sighted nothing : they were not ordered to renew the patrol, and were soon absorbed in other duties. At some time on the 20th or 21st the *Moewe* must have passed through the zone previously watched by the 4th Light Cruiser Squadron.

The *Moewe*'s relief—she was renamed the *Leopard*—was not so fortunate ; but her failure to escape into the Atlantic can only be explained by a retrospective glance at our arrangements for closing the North Sea.

In March 1916 the Commander-in-Chief had ordered that the Northern Patrol should be reinforced from the three Grand Fleet cruiser squadrons. His intention was to keep one cruiser watching the meridian of the Shetlands between latitude  $62^{\circ}$  and  $65^{\circ}$ ; for he considered it certain that outgoing and incoming raiders would cross this line. In the course of time this extra patrol became a supplementary force to the 10th Cruiser Squadron further west ; and the duty of maintaining it, which, in the beginning, had been divided equally between the 2nd, 3rd and 7th Cruiser Squadrons, had fallen entirely upon the 2nd. The business of the patrol had also increased as time went on : in March 1916 it was intended to keep one cruiser and one armed boarding steamer on the work : a year later the allotted force was trebled.

On March 11, 1917, Admiral Fremantle issued one of his periodic instructions to the 2nd Cruiser Squadron. From March 10 until reliefs arrived, the patrol line north of the Shetlands was to be occupied by the *Achilles* and the *Dundee*, the *Minotaur* and the *Royal Scot*, the *Duke of Edinburgh* and the *Fiona*. The ships sailed from Swarbacks Minn on the appointed dates, and the week passed uneventfully ; on March 16, the day before they were relieved, the *Achilles* and the *Dundee* were patrolling at the northern end of the line. The weather was as bleak and cheerless as the high latitude could make it. The sky was a mass of dull grey

moving rapidly towards the northern horizon before a south-east wind; from time to time a patch of darker colour would bring with it a snow squall or a burst of cold, biting rain, more chilling than the snow itself. Just before noon on the 16th a steamer was sighted to the eastward of the *Achilles*. There was nothing remarkable in this; ships had been sighted and examined every day; it was the ordinary work of the patrol; so Captain F. M. Leake of the *Achilles* turned eastwards, and signalled to the *Dundee* to follow. The unknown steamer was evidently fast; for it was not until two o'clock that the *Achilles*, steaming at 15, and later at 18 knots, came up to her. She stopped when ordered and obeyed a further signal to turn towards the *Dundee*, which had fallen astern.<sup>1</sup> As soon as these two orders had been carried out, Captain Leake ordered Commander Selwyn M. Day, R.N.R., the captain of the *Dundee*, to lower a boat and examine her. Commander Day was, by now, very suspicious. The steamer was flying the Norwegian flag and called herself the *Rena*; it was true the name appeared in Lloyd's Register, but Commander Day could not understand why the letter N should have been painted upside down, and when the ship was bows on he realised that she was a large vessel, far larger than the 3,000 tons *Rena* of the register. Commander Day noticed also that all superfluous woodwork had been removed, and that she had no wireless; she had, moreover, steamed well and steadily at 13 knots for several hours, a thing of which no genuine cargo boat is capable. He spoke of all this to his assistant, Lieutenant F. H. Lawson, R.N.R., and told him that he thought the new-comer was a raider.

Lieutenant Lawson at once volunteered to take charge of the boarding boat: an act of deliberate courage which cost him his life. At a quarter to three it was put into the water, and was rowed across towards the *Rena*: it was soon out of sight on her lee side. While Commander Day was waiting for the boarding party to give him a sign or a signal he manoeuvred his ship so as to keep her on the stranger's weather quarter, ready, if needs be, to rake her with his two 4-inch guns. If he was right in supposing that she was a disguised raider his position was most dangerous, for a broadside from her would blow him out of the water, and his only protection against it was to keep her from getting him on her beam. He therefore kept his ship in movement and noticed, after a few minutes, that the enemy was continually turning, as though trying to out-maneuvre him.

<sup>1</sup> The *Dundee* was an armed boarding steamer of 2,187 tons, with two 4-inch guns.

Commander Day kept his guns' crews closed up and waited. At twenty minutes to four, nearly an hour after Lieutenant Lawson had left the ship, the stranger's Norwegian flag, painted on her port quarter, fell out-board with a crash. Commander Day waited no longer but at once gave the order to fire; almost as he did so, two torpedoes passed the *Dundee*'s stern, hardly twenty yards away. The *Achilles* was four miles away in the east-north-east, so that the *Dundee* was now in the greatest danger. The enemy raider at first steamed away; as she did so Commander Day steered across her stern and raked her with his 4-inch guns; as the range was very close every shot went home, and in a few minutes volumes of smoke and steam rose from the enemy. After a few minutes the German captain put his helm over and turned to starboard, but Commander Day was ready for him; he ported his helm so as to keep the enemy behind him and so dodged the deadly broadside. When the turns were completed the *Dundee* had fired over forty shells, and tremendous clouds of smoke were being carried north-westward from the burning raider. Almost simultaneously the *Achilles* opened fire. Commander Day had now opened the range as much as he could, and decided, most unselfishly, that he must now risk everything to give the cruiser a clear line of fire: he therefore steered straight for the *Achilles* down the lane of smoke. As he did so, the enemy sent down a broadside; fortunately her firing was wild, and a few minutes later the armed boarding steamer was under the shelter of the *Achilles*.

About five minutes after the first gun was fired by the *Dundee* the *Achilles*'s gunnery officer was recording hits upon the enemy. The raider was now a doomed vessel. She was often hidden from view in clouds of black smoke, and several times the gunners in the *Achilles* had to check their fire. For nearly an hour the Germans stood up against the stream of shell which poured into their ship; her internal fires, and the bursts of the heavy shell from the *Achilles*, started explosions and sent up jets of flame through the smoke clouds which rose out of her: when she began to settle down it seemed to some that the whole of her fore-part was red-hot; others thought that it was melting; but the Germans fought on without any sign of surrender. They could certainly have yielded without dishonour before the end came. It was thought both in the *Achilles* and the *Dundee* that the raider fought under the Norwegian colours. This may or may not be so; it would be easy enough to make a mistake on such a point in the confusion of an action; and men who fought

with such courage would be hardly likely to go to their death under a foreign flag. Just after half-past four the raider sank. There were no survivors; Lieutenant Lawson and his crew perished with the Germans: he was doubtless made a prisoner when he went alongside the raider. He knew what he was doing when he volunteered to board so suspicious a ship, and he would never have wished his friends to hold their hands for his sake. He and his men must have spent their last moments of life in full knowledge of the success which they had bought.

## 3

*The Seeadler*

For the next six days no ships were reported overdue; but on March 22 news came in which showed that our difficulties were by no means ended. A neutral vessel arriving from the South American trade route informed us that she had been stopped on February 25 by a full-rigged ship, armed with guns and fitted with full raiding equipment and an auxiliary motor. The new raider was the *Seeadler*, formerly the *Pass of Balmaha*: and her captain, Count von Luckner.<sup>1</sup> When first reported he had already been at sea for nearly three months, and had made several captures. His story claims our attention for the thoroughness and skill with which he had prepared for his cruise, and our admiration for the seamanlike chivalry with which he conducted it.

Felix von Luckner's career had not been that of an ordinary German officer. He had begun by going round the world in a sailing vessel as a fo'c'sle hand under the name of Phylax Lüdicke; he had then passed the examination for an officer in the merchant marine, and finally through the influence of his family had entered the Imperial Navy. After serving in the *Kronprinz* at the battle of Jutland, he was transferred to the *Moewe*, where he remained under Count zu Dohna's command until the late autumn of the year. His very unusual training had evidently been carefully noted at the German Admiralty; for, when they formed their plans for sending out raiders at the end of 1916, Count von Luckner was sent for and ordered to take command of the *Pass of Balmaha*, a captured American sailing ship; to fit her out as a commerce raider at Geestemunde, and to get

<sup>1</sup> *Seeteufel*, by Graf Felix von Luckner.

to sea when he could. He carried out these orders with foresight and ingenuity. His first care was to get his vessel fitted with an auxiliary engine of 1,000 horse-power, and with oil stowage of 480 tons and large fresh-water tanks. The whole of the 'tween deck space was then furnished to receive prisoners, and hammocks and bedding were got ready. Cabins with three bunks and a washing basin each were built on the lower deck for officer prisoners, and a library of French and English books was got together to console them during their confinement. At the same time Count von Luckner searched all the shipping records he could lay his hands on, and found that the *Pass of Balmaha* resembled a Norwegian sailing vessel named the *Maleta*, which, in the past, had carried cargoes between Copenhagen and Melbourne. He accordingly decided that his new command should be made to look as like her as possible and should sail under the fictitious name of *Irma*. A complete set of ship's papers, as for a voyage to Melbourne with timber, was prepared; all the vessel's deck machinery and even the thermometers, barometers and compasses were stamped with the names of Norwegian firms; the fo'c'sle was painted out and decorated with Norwegian picture postcards and illustrations from Norwegian weekly papers. The personal records of the German Admiralty were then searched, and 23 seamen who could speak Norwegian were selected as part of the crew. Each was given a fictitious name and place of birth, and ordered to read up all about his native town in Bädeker, so that he might speak with ease and familiarity of its streets and public buildings. To each, moreover, was handed a packet of family letters, or love-letters, which the Count had ordered to be composed by a Norwegian scholar, and then rewritten in twenty different handwritings. To these were added photographs of girls, and of wives and children, stamped with the names of Norwegian photographers in every part of the country. Every man was then examined on the contents of his packet to be quite sure that he would make no slip inconsistent with their contents—would know, for example, exactly what terms he was on with his sweetheart; what was his father's position or occupation; how many children he had, and what were their ages. It was made a punishable minor offence for a man to say, in December, that he had a baby ten months old, and not to have added the corresponding number of months when cross-questioned again in March. Little is known about the character and personality of the carefully imaginative man who made these preparations. In his photographs

he looks like a German officer who affects the English style of appearance; his face is long, and beyond a slight prominence of the eyes his features are not remarkable. The photograph is rather theatrical, and shows him with a haughty, unattractive expression, which does not at all agree with what we know of him. His officers, being chosen from the merchant service, were certainly not his social equals; but he lived with them on easy terms, and seems to have admitted them to his friendship. In all the testimonies of his English and French prisoners there is no word of complaint against him; some even go out of their way to say that he treated them kindly; we can therefore conclude, with certainty, that he was a bold, calculating and adventurous leader; and we have every reason to believe that he was a kindly and courteous gentleman as well.

After a long wait in the Heligoland Bight, the *Seeadler* sailed on December 21, 1916.<sup>1</sup> Count von Luckner was clear in his mind that he would have to face an inspection by the British cruisers; if sighted he could not get away from them; and if he fell in with foul winds between Iceland and the Faroes, he might be beating to and fro for days across the British lines of patrol. Everything, therefore, depended upon the disguise of the ship and crew; which had been completed by dressing up a youngster, with a slight figure and a fresh girlish face, as a woman, in a habit specially made by a dressmaker ashore. The boy was instructed to play the part of captain's wife, and to pretend to be suffering from very severe toothache when the British officers came on board. By this artifice it was hoped that, out of respect for a sick woman, the boarding officers would not press their cross-examination too rigorously, and would be content with looking at the ship's papers.

The *Seeadler* soon fell in with a very severe south-westerly gale which drove her far to the north; when the weather abated, her sails and running and standing rigging were so completely frozen that she could not spread more canvas. Count von Luckner therefore steered to the southward, and on Christmas Day was brought to by an armed merchant cruiser, about midway between the Faroes and Iceland. The German-speaking section of the crew went below, and hid

<sup>1</sup> This wait was nearly fatal to him. On December 1 the British Minister at Christiania warned the Government that a German warship would pass Haugesund that night. The Commander-in-Chief was informed, and sent out intercepting forces to close the exits from the North Sea on the 10th: they remained at sea until the 14th. The Minister was mistaken; the ship passing the Sound was an interned merchantman.

themselves in the cargo with bombs, rifles and revolvers in their hands. Our two officers then examined the ship's papers and the log, in the teeth of some ten invisible bayonets. The inspection was quite conscientiously carried out and nothing roused our officers' suspicions. As the ship's papers had been forged before the *Seeadler* was held up in the Heligoland Bight, the dates on her cargo manifest and bills of lading proved that her voyage had been delayed. The log was presumably written so as to show her at anchor in some Norwegian fjord during the time of her actual stay off the German rivers, and our boarding officer not unnaturally asked why the ship had been held up: Luckner answered that he had been warned against German raiders, which were then abroad and would certainly confiscate his ship and cargo if they found her. This satisfied our boarding officer, who went over the side into his boat. Everything seemed to have gone well for Luckner; but in the next minute the whole artifice was on the point of being discovered. The *Seeadler* had backed her main topsails for the inspection, and was drifting slowly to leeward; the result was that the examination officer's boat, which had made fast on the lee side, could not get clear, and was dragged aft as the crew tried to shove off with their boat-hooks. Count von Luckner thus saw the inspecting officers carried almost over the screw of the auxiliary motor, of which no mention had been made in the ship's papers; the British officers had only to look into the water to see it and the adventure was at an end. But Luckner's nerve did not fail him: as the boat drifted aft he went to the side, passed down a rope, and swung it to and fro so that the two officers in the boat had to duck to avoid being struck. As was to be expected, everybody looked upwards at the rope instead of downwards at the propeller; and a minute later the boat was clear of the *Seeadler*'s side. As soon as the British cruiser was out of sight, the cargo was thrown overboard, the ensign hoisted and Christmas Day celebrated in German uniform.<sup>1</sup>

Count von Luckner soon picked up a fair wind for his southerly voyage, which brought him to his first hunting-ground off the Rocas in three weeks. On his way he captured the British steamers *Gladys Royle* and *Lundy Island*. The *Seeadler*'s course carried her to the westward of the Canaries, somewhere between the meridians of 25° and 30° W.; and

<sup>1</sup> This is Luckner's story; it cannot be corroborated in every detail, but it seems probable that his ship was examined by the armed merchant cruiser *Patia*, and that the *Seeadler* at the time was disguised as the Norwegian sailing ship *Hero*, bound to Melbourne with a cargo of timber.

she was in the Madeira-Cape Verde area between January 9 and January 17. That a raider should have passed through the zone so easily shows the change which had come over the conditions of war in the Atlantic during the preceding twelve months. It was only by an extraordinary chance that Count zu Dohna slipped through the 9th Cruiser Squadron in his first voyage a year before; and if the conditions had been the same, that is, if Admiral Sheppard's vessels had been patrolling the passage between Madeira and the Canaries, whilst the *Highflyer* watched the tracks between the Cape Verde Islands, a sailing ship proceeding south under full canvas could hardly have avoided observation at some point in the zone, seeing that it took her eight days to pass through it. But the submarine campaign had by now made it impossible for the 9th Cruiser Squadron to maintain the patrol, and our system of controlling the Central Atlantic had been modified accordingly. In October 1916, *U 53*, under Lieutenant-Commander Hans Rose, had appeared on the American coast, and sunk vessels off the Nantucket light-vessel; which meant that the Madeira-Canaries zone was thenceforth within the reach of German submarines. The fact was emphasised by the bombardment of Funchal on December 3. In itself this would not have been enough to make us withdraw our patrol; but it made it much more difficult. Our cruisers could no longer move to and fro at low speed and coal at the open anchorages in the islands. All ship movements had to begin and end at Sierra Leone or Dakar, since no other place would serve for taking in coal, water and provisions. The 9th Cruiser Squadron was, moreover, burdened with an additional duty which made it quite impossible to keep the zone under a continuous patrol. In December 1916 it was decided that the Mediterranean route should no longer be used by transports which had to pass through the canal; in other words, that all troop movements to and from Australia, India and New Zealand should go round the Cape. This meant that the 9th Cruiser Squadron had to escort the troopships of the Australian and New Zealand armies between the Cape and the mouth of the English Channel. As the stream of ships was continuous, the new duty practically superseded the old.

For these reasons Count von Luckner was able to pursue his voyage without disturbance, and on January 21 he reached a position to the north of the St. Paul Rocks and captured the French barque *Charles Gounod*. He then held on to the south for a week, and after sinking the *Perce*, a British schooner, on the 28th, made to the north-west. For

the next six weeks he operated within a rectangular area about 360 miles long and 180 wide, the extreme points of which were respectively some 210 and 550 miles to the north-westward of St. Paul Rocks.<sup>1</sup> The area was never so much as crossed by our cruisers, which were all operating against the *Moewe* further south. As Count von Luckner was not in any danger from them, it would be of no use to compare his movements with ours. Between January 20, when he reached his raiding ground, and March 21, when he left it, he seized nine ships and took 260 prisoners. Most of his captures were sailing ships, and amongst them was the British ship *Pinmore*, in which, years before, he had sailed round the world as the fo'c'sle hand Phylax Lüdicke. He went on board her, and after rummaging about in the familiar corners of the fo'c'sle and the saloon, and seeing the mark on the brass of the steering-wheel, where he had cut his initials "F. v. L.", he gave, with feelings of keen regret, the order that she should be sunk.<sup>2</sup> On March 21 he seized the French sailing ship *Cambronne*, which was carrying Chilean nitrates to France, and to her he transferred all his prisoners. Realising that he would need a long start if he were to escape from our cruisers after the alarm had been given, he ordered his men to saw off the *Cambronne's* top-gallant masts and bowsprit, so that she would make a slow passage to Rio. He then put Captain Mullen of the *Pinmore* in charge of her and gave him the course. The *Cambronne* thus sailed under the colours of three different nations in one day.

The prisoners and their captor parted on extremely good terms. Count von Luckner had taken no precautions against the *Seeadler* being recaptured by them; thinking probably

<sup>1</sup> See Map 9.

<sup>2</sup> After his own capture and before being sent back to Germany, Luckner made a statement before Captain Thompson, R.N., the naval adviser to the New Zealand Government, in which he stated that he took the *Pinmore* into Rio, and impersonated Captain Mullen in front of the Brazilian authorities. He alleges that he put his arm in a sling so that he should not be compelled to sign his name; and, having bought provisions, and got what news he could of the British cruisers, put to sea again, and met the *Seeadler* at a rendezvous. He says not one word of this in his printed memoirs, and the story is most improbable. We have not, it is true, got Captain Mullen's deposition; but the adventure is not even hinted at in the existing testimonies. This is not the only reason for disbelieving it: all our official news of the raid was sent by our diplomatic representatives in Rio; there is no suggestion of this *Pinmore* adventure in any of their telegrams, and it is inconceivable that the prisoners should have said nothing about it to them. The story is not, in itself, impossible; but it is more likely that Count von Luckner could not resist the temptation to score off his captors by making them believe that they had been more careless and stupid than was really the case.

that their difference of race and language made all concerted action between them impossible. Everybody had, therefore, been allowed to roam about the ship as they wished; and apart from this, Count von Luckner had several times acted graciously and generously. During the chase of the *Horngarth*, a British ship, one of her boys had been killed by the *Seeadler's* shells: he was buried at sea with full honours, under the British flag, and Count von Luckner himself read the burial service over him. When the *British Yeoman* was taken, and it was seen that there was a woman on board her, Luckner gave his only other woman captive a bunch of flowers, and told her to receive the new-comer at the gangway and reassure her. On many an evening the *Seeadler's* band had been told to play "Tipperary." All this had impressed the prisoners, as well it might; so that they were transferred to the *Cambronne* with cheers and shouting; and even the French masters, whose proud, implacable attitude had deeply impressed Count von Luckner, shook hands with him before they went over the side for the last time.

On the very day that the transfer was being made we heard that this new raider was abroad, and that she had last been seen on February 25 some 420 miles to the northwest of St. Paul Rocks. On March 30 the *Cambronne* arrived at Rio, and on the following day came a message from our Embassy there, giving details of the captured crews. The *Seeadler* had last been seen on the 22nd; Count von Luckner had therefore contrived to secure for himself a start of nine days.

It was very doubtful whether it would be enough. From the crews of the captured ships we learned that the Germans had always kept charts of Cape Horn, and this gave us a very good clue to the raider's intentions. We had seven ships on the west coast of South America at the time: of these the *Lancaster* and *Otranto* were at San Nicolas, Peru, the *Orbita* was at Mejillones, and the *Avoca* in northern British Columbia. On the 1st of April, therefore, the *Lancaster*, *Orbita* and *Otranto* were ordered to proceed to the south to intercept the raider.

When these cruisers were set on his track, Count von Luckner was in mid-Atlantic on the meridian of Buenos Aires. He had therefore very nearly as far to go under sail as his pursuers had under steam, and he was faced with the trial of getting round the Horn at a very bad time of year. Our cruisers were thus bound to arrive at the intercepting point in time; but whether they would be able to pick up

a single sailing ship in those wild waters was much less certain.

On the 5th the Admiralty sent out a further order to the effect that the *Orbita* and *Otranto* were to patrol on a line running north and south from Cape Horn, and were to keep the collier *Finisterre* in their company. The *Lancaster* was to proceed south as fast as she could. Thanks to a fair wind, Count von Luckner very nearly preceded our cruisers. They had not been able to go south simultaneously; on the 13th, whilst the *Seeadler* was about a day's sail from Staten Island, the *Orbita* had not yet reached the latitude of the Magellan Straits, the *Otranto* was half a day's steaming from Darwin Bay, and the *Lancaster* was between Valparaiso and Coquimbo. The next day enabled them to pick up the lead; the *Seeadler* made little progress owing to head winds, whilst the *Orbita*, steaming all day at 14 knots, was a few hours short of Cape Horn by noon on the 14th. The Admiralty's orders were that she should stop there on patrol; but this the captain did not do, either because he had never been given the Admiralty telegram, or because the senior officer of the cruisers had superseded the Admiralty instructions by others of which we know nothing. The *Orbita* did not remain off the Horn, but went straight on; and by noon on the 15th had passed Staten Island, and was steering north. By then the *Seeadler* was in a fair way to get past her; for Count von Luckner, finding the winds contrary and the weather very bad, headed south on the starboard tack during the 14th, and was 200 miles south-south-east of the *Orbita* at noon on the 15th. The *Otranto*, the nearest ship after him, was one day's steaming to the south of Darwin Bay, and still north of the 50th parallel. If the *Seeadler* had chanced to get a slant of wind, as sometimes, though very rarely, happens to a ship bound westward round the Horn, she might have given the *Orbita* the slip and preceded the *Otranto* and the *Lancaster*; but the wind kept in the north-west for the next two days and forced her southward. On the 16th it still headed her, but she made fair progress: by noon on the 17th she was on the meridian of the Horn and about 120 miles to the south of it: the *Otranto*, which had just arrived, was then at Orange Bay, whilst the *Orbita* was patrolling off the eastern entrance to the Magellan Straits.

At this point there occurred an incident which is very difficult to explain: Count von Luckner states on the chart attached to his memoirs that he sighted a British cruiser on the 18th; and in the text (p. 196), the same incident or a similar one is assigned to the 24th. But after making every

allowance for the errors which must inevitably occur by transferring Luckner's track from a very small-scale map, it is impossible to find that the *Seeadler*'s course was even within eighty miles of that of the *Otranto* (the nearest ship to her) on the 18th, and it is quite certain that all our cruisers were several hundred miles away from her on the 25th. If the track of the *Seeadler* be compared with those of the *Orbita* and *Otranto*, it will be seen that she slipped past them between noon of the 17th and noon of the 19th by keeping well to the southward; whilst the *Otranto* patrolled on a line about thirty miles to the south of the Horn. It is therefore hard to see how the German and British ships could have come within sighting distance of one another; and only one possible solution of the problem can be offered. Throughout the 18th the wind headed the *Seeadler* and blew hard from the west-south-west: it is, therefore, just conceivable that, if Count von Luckner stood to the northward on a long board, his masthead-man may, at some time, have reported the *Otranto* to the northward, visible for a moment in some interval of the driving scud and haze. This would at any rate agree with Luckner's statement that he instantly put his helm up to port and wore the ship to get away. If it is true that he got as near to the *Otranto* as he thinks he did, his escape was a truly marvellous piece of good fortune; for a sailing ship even though she is under reduced canvas is more easily picked up at sea than a steamship, and if he sighted us, it is impossible to say why we failed to sight him.

By the 19th then the *Seeadler* was clear of our cruisers; by the 21st had made enough westing for a northerly course to be set. According to a vague report, she passed within sight of Valparaiso on the 23rd; but after that we heard no more of her for many weeks.<sup>1</sup>

On April 28 the *Avoca*, which was then at Esquimalt, was ordered to search the Galapagos Islands; she did so between May 14 and 16, but found nothing, for Count von Luckner, after reaching the 35th parallel, made north-westwards for the Central Pacific.

To this point he had had the fortune that he deserved; but his star had now passed its blazing period, and, like other temporary stars, was doomed to fade rapidly towards extinction. By June 8 the *Seeadler* had reached the Equator, in about longitude 150°. The position was not upon any recognised track; but American sailing ships do a good deal

<sup>1</sup> The report was undoubtedly wrong: the *Seeadler* went north along the 80th meridian until she reached the latitude of Talcahuano, and then steered north-west.

of trading in the Central Pacific, and it was doubtless against these that Count von Luckner hoped to operate. He was not very successful, for he only captured three American schooners in rather over five weeks, and after this the ship's doctor told him that the crew were showing signs of scurvy. The *Seeadler* was then turned southwards, and on July 28 anchored off Mopeha, a deserted island, covered with cocoanut trees and abounding in turtle. The entrance to the lagoon was so narrow and intricate that she had to anchor outside it, and for three days the crew rested in camp ashore and recovered. On August 2 disaster overtook them; almost without warning the sea became violently disturbed, and within a few minutes the *Seeadler* was in a very heavy sea-way. Before the motor could be started she parted her cables and was driven against the reef: a few minutes later she was a total wreck.

Count von Luckner faced the disaster with his usual energy: two boats were saved; provisions, fire-arms, canvas and spars were got ashore, and habitable quarters set up for the men. Three weeks after the shipwreck, Luckner, with three officers and two seamen, was out in the Pacific in an open boat, about 20 feet long, loaded with hand-grenades, rifles and munitions, intending to capture the largest schooner he could master, to return to Mopeha with it and to start afresh. He was not successful. Having made his way to Atiu, an island in the Cook Group, he landed; and, after telling the Chief Resident that he and his officers were Dutch Americans, persuaded him to give them fresh fruit and provisions. He and his companions then sailed westwards, and cast anchor at Aituaki. Here the inhabitants were not so gullible, and the natives loudly clamoured that the visitors should be arrested. The Resident hesitated, but finally let them go. He was quite unarmed, and doubted whether he would be able to overpower them, for they had taken him to their launch and shown him their revolvers and grenades. Luckner and his men then sailed westwards, and on September 21 anchored off Wakaya, in the Fiji Group, utterly exhausted. They were discovered by a half-caste trader, who informed the authorities, and the police were set on their track. After a day's stay at their anchorage, during which they seem to have made friends with the captain of a local schooner, the adventurers were arrested by a group of native policemen under a white officer. Count von Luckner, as he was caught out of uniform, decided that he ought not to fight it out.

He was first placed in the common jail at Suva, and then transferred to New Zealand. Here his confinement was very easy, and he was lodged on the island of Motuhi with a

number of interned Germans from Samoa. As might be expected, he soon got an ascendancy over his fellow-prisoners, and persuaded a selected group of them to escape under his leadership. By carefully preparing their plan they succeeded in getting hold of the commandant's launch, in which they reached Red Mercury Island and there lay in wait, until after a couple of days two small schooners sailed by. One of these they boarded and seized, and sailed in it to the Kermadec Islands; but there they were overtaken and brought back by the cable steamer *Iris*, sent out in search by the New Zealand Government. Henceforward Count von Luckner's imprisonment was more rigorous; but he never lost hope, and, when the day of the Armistice arrived, he was once more plotting some desperate scheme of escape.

Those of the *Seeadler*'s crew who had been left behind at Mopeha were equally unfortunate. Lieutenant Kling, their senior officer, put to sea in the other launch, and managed to overpower a French schooner, in which he and his men sailed to Easter Island. Here they sank their boat and were picked up by a Chilean cruiser, which carried them to the continent. After a certain amount of correspondence, the Chilean Government agreed that they should be treated as belligerents who had taken refuge in neutral territory, and interned them accordingly.

The *Seeadler*'s captures in mid-Pacific were not reported to us, so that we knew nothing certain of her from the end of March to the beginning of September. In consequence, we were soon obliged to call off our vessels from active searching, and make our dispositions preventive only. We were much assisted in this by America's entry into the war. At the end of June a force of four American armoured cruisers arrived in Rio de Janeiro, and at once arranged for a combined patrol of the route between Fernando Noronha and the Plate. The Brazilian Government followed America's lead, and broke off diplomatic relations with Germany in April. In July they informed our Government that the Brazilian navy intended to patrol the coast from Rio Grande do Sul to the Guianas. All this strengthened our hold of the South American routes considerably; but these additional forces were not used to extend our patrol to the north and northwest of the Rocas, although it was in this area that the *Karlsruhe* had operated in 1914, and it was here that Count zu Dohna and Count von Luckner had made most of their captures. There were, inevitably, gaps in our dispositions, and the Rocas area was one of them. Early in July the French cruiser *Marseillaise* visited Rio to confer with the United

States Admiral, and her captain pointed out that the existing dispositions left unprotected a point on the trade routes which had been persistently attacked.

To our operations on the west coast America's entry into the war made less difference; for the Washington Government sent no reinforcements to our squadron in Chilean waters. On May 8, when it was fairly clear that the raider had either gone home or had cleared the Horn and entered the Pacific, the captain of the *Lancaster* wired to suggest that the *Otranto* and *Orbita* would be better employed on the trade routes than off the Horn, as the long dark nights and the foul weather would make interception almost impossible. The Admiralty replied that the two cruisers were to remain south of Valparaiso for the time being. If the raider should appear further north, between Panama and Iquique, ships would be sent through the Panama Canal to intercept her. Permission was, however, given to station the *Avoca* off the northern coasts of Chile.

On the strength of this, the *Orbita* and *Otranto* withdrew from the Horn, and a regular patrol was set up to the south of Valparaiso: one ship was kept continuously between the Gulf of Penas and Ancud; the other worked on this southern section of the patrol when she could, but left it for periodical visits to Valdivia, Coronel and Valparaiso. The disposition naturally caused Captain Seagrave of the *Lancaster* some uneasiness, for it left the trade route off the ports of Peru practically without protection; and about a month later he sent home the following telegram: "If the raider appears, its probable point of attack will be the nitrate trade near Iquique or the traffic near Santa Elena, Ecuador, and Gulf of Panama, using Galapagos Islands as base. Consider it important that one ship should be in the vicinity of one of these places to act if occasion requires. Trade south of Valparaiso is negligible; but raider coming round Cape Horn might use anchorage in Chonos to refit and store before going north. I therefore recommend that one ship should cruise between the Gulf of Penas and Coquimbo; another between Valparaiso and Callao, and another between Callao and Panama, periodically examining the Galapagos Islands."

To this the Admiralty answered simply that the previous disposition was to be maintained. No further active searching was done during the *Seeadler*'s raid. On September 24, news came in that two German naval officers and four men had been captured at Wakaya. As we had learned, on the day before, that a boat-load of suspicious strangers had visited Aituaki, there could be no great doubt that the two

reports referred to the same party. It was clear, therefore, that the *Seeadler* must be somewhere to the eastward of the Fiji Islands; but it was not until five days later that the prisoners informed our officers that their ship was a wreck at Mopeha.

After the *Samland* had reported, on December 7, 1916, that there was a German raider in mid-Atlantic, a long interval followed, during which we knew nothing of what she was doing and nothing to guide us as to her whereabouts. On January 3, therefore, when our last news was nearly a month old, the Admiralty warned the Commanders-in-Chief of the China and East Indies stations that the raider might intend to attack trade on the routes in the Indian Ocean. Vice-Admiral W. L. Grant, the Commander-in-Chief of the China station, answered that the measures for spreading traffic were in full force and that the focal points in the Bay of Bengal would be protected; but he warned Whitehall that he had not sufficient force at his disposal to defend the route between Colombo and Australia. The measures to which he thus referred must be described in detail; for they were about to be tested by a raider who was actually on her way to the Indian Ocean when the Admiralty sent out their message.

In June 1916, Admiral Wemyss, the Commander-in-Chief of the East Indies station, had held a conference with Admiral Grant at Colombo. They both realised, from the *Moewe's* recent raid, how necessary it was to safeguard the trade routes against surface raiders, and a plan for doing so was agreed between them. As in the Atlantic, the general purpose of the scheme was to see that ships kept away from the ordinary routes, and to make sure that naval protection was provided at points where traffic was bound to congregate. This was done by plotting a number of new tracks on either side of the normal route between any two places, and by giving vessels special sailing orders at their ports of departure. These orders were so made out that all ships used these artificially created routes; but no two steamers leaving harbour in succession used the same one. The number of traffic lanes which had to be drawn on either side of any given track, in order to give shipping the requisite amount of spread, varied with the volume of trade to be diverted.

The intention of the whole scheme was to protect the stream of shipping which moves, in both directions, between Acheh Head and Aden. To do this the traffic was spread over five tracks in its eastern section, and over eight in its western. Between Acheh Head and Colombo, the northern track ran through the Ten-degree Channel; whilst the

southern one, after curving round Acheh Head, ran along the parallel of  $3\frac{1}{2}$ ° N. to a point about 150 miles south-south-east of Pointe de Galle, when it inclined upwards to Colombo. On its western half the spread was greater, as here the mass of shipping was increased by the traffic to and from the ports in the Bay of Bengal and Australia. The northern track, therefore, ran along the fifteenth parallel; the southern-most passed through the One-and-a-half-degree Channel, in the Maldives, to a point about 360 miles to the (true) north-north-west of the Seychelles, after which it inclined towards the Gulf of Aden. In the Bay of Bengal itself the shipping was diverted and spread in the same way; four special tracks were laid down between Calcutta and Colombo and three between Colombo and Rangoon.

This dispersal made it practically certain that a raider would sink very little tonnage by attacking the central part of the routes; but it made naval protection at the points where the tracks converged more necessary than ever; for the focal points were now the junctions of many tracks, instead of the congested ports of a few, and therefore spread over a wider area than they do in peace time. They were, in consequence, more difficult to patrol. Natural causes had divided these focal points very unevenly between the spheres of the two naval commands in the Indian Ocean. To take the China station first; here there fell to the Commander-in-Chief the duty of guarding : (i) the zone to the east of Colombo and the north-east of Ceylon; (ii) the approaches to Calcutta; (iii) the track to the north and south of the Andaman Islands, and (iv) the route to the north of Acheh Head; in addition to which he had to keep some kind of patrol in the Malacca Straits (420 miles long), where no dispersion was possible, and to be prepared to guard the Sunda Straits, where a raider could do great mischief in the congested flow of traffic to and from the Dutch East Indies and the Far East. Later in the year, a number of special transport routes were added to the other traffic lanes; but these need not be examined in detail. Those with which we are most concerned ran from the Leeuwin to Aden, and the Leeuwin to Colombo. Like the special traffic routes, they were laid down well away from the direct track, but they necessarily converged at the points just described.

Admiral Grant had covered the principal focal points in his command by nine patrol areas: three to the south and east of Ceylon; three on the northern approaches to the Malacca Straits, one to the south of the Andaman Islands, and one to the north of them, and one off the south and

south-western approaches to the Hooghli. He endeavoured to distribute his cruisers over these zones as evenly as possible; but he never, at any time, had enough ships to occupy them all simultaneously and effectively. A force of Japanese vessels under Admiral Oguri generally guarded the Straits of Malacca from Penang, and was named the Brothers patrol—from the group of islands off Batu Bara, half-way down the western side of the straits.

On the East Indian station the principal responsibilities of the Commander-in-Chief were in the Gulf of Aden. The tracks along which shipping had been diverted converged to the north and south of Sokotra. The three southernmost combined off Cape Guardafui; the remaining five ran fairly close together along the Gulf of Aden. Thus at each end of these trade routes the shipping had to run down a lane where dispersal was practically impossible. As many cruisers as could possibly be spared were, therefore, kept in the area between Socotra, Cape Guardafui and the Arabian shore; and a vessel was generally detached to the Straits of Bab-el-Mandeb for duty on the Perim patrol.

This was the position when the Admiralty sent out their warning; and their appreciation was quite correct, for the Indian Ocean was about to be raided, though not by the *Moewe*.

## 4

*The Wolf*

For their third raider the German Admiralty had chosen the Hansa liner *Wachtfels*, 3,600 tons. They placed Captain Karl Neger in command of her and ordered him to fit her out for her purpose. When ready, he was to "interfere with enemy shipping in distant seas, more particularly in the Indian Ocean." He accordingly renamed her the *Wolf*, armed her with two 6-inch and four 4-inch guns, and fitted her with a small scouting seaplane, which was stowed amidships; he also carried mines, 500 in all, which were stowed in one of the holds. By the end of November he sailed, and slipped past our cruisers by keeping very far to the north. During the critical days the weather was exceptionally bad, and he pounded to the westward in a blizzard of wind and snow, of such severity that it was not until December 10 that he was out in the Atlantic clear of the British patrols. He then held straight on for the Cape, keeping in mid-Atlantic to lessen the chance of any incident which might reveal his presence.

During the fortnight following the Admiralty's warning telegram, we made ready to meet the raider in the Indian Ocean with as much care and forethought as though we knew the last detail of Captain Nerger's intentions. The Commander-in-Chief at the Cape was ordered to postpone his impending visit to East Africa in the *Hyacinth*, and to keep an efficient ship at the Cape. The Commander-in-Chief, East Indies, withdrew the *Minerva* from Rabegh, in the Red Sea, and ordered her to strengthen the patrol of the "congested area off Sokotra." The French Government were equally vigilant. During the first week in January they sent out a general warning to the Governors of Madagascar, Indo China, New Caledonia and Tahiti, and suggested that their forces and ours should co-operate in any plan that might be settled when the situation became clearer.

By the time these last precautions were taken Captain Nerger was nearing the Cape, after a completely uneventful voyage through the Atlantic. On January 16, 1917, as he approached the land, he saw the *Cornwall* and six transports steam by him on a northerly course. That evening he laid his first minefield off Dassen Island, Saldanha Bay. Some hours later, probably on the next day, he mined the track to the south of Cape Agulhas, and then steamed off towards Colombo, keeping well clear of the shipping routes.

The minefield was not at once discovered, and two days later the Admiralty got news that the *Moewe* had been operating off the Plate route on the 12th, the date on which Count zu Dohna captured the *Minieh*. This was duly wired to the Commanders-in-Chief in the Indian Ocean, but rather tended to put them off the scent. All precautions had been taken on the assumption that the *Moewe* was about to raid the eastern trade routes; it now seemed that the danger was far more remote than had been imagined. By January 25, therefore, Admiral Grant had decided that on the strength of the latest news he could withdraw the patrols off Colombo and Penang, and direct the *Venus* to return to Singapore. On the very next day two freighters, the *Matheran* and the *Portugal*, got into the minefield off Dassen Island: the first sank, but the second was towed into Simon's Bay. The telegram which announced the casualties suggested that the vessels had been torpedoed; so that this news too did not help us to grasp the position, but rather the contrary. A Swedish ship then in Cape Town was detained and thoroughly searched; and after it was evident that her master and owners were innocent of all complicity, the three Commanders-in-Chief were ordered to stop all transports

sailing for South Africa, as a submarine had been operating off Cape Town on the 26th. Later in the day, sailings were ordered to be resumed, as the authorities at the Cape had informed the Admiralty that the ships had probably been lost owing to internal explosions. It was not until February 1 that the Commander-in-Chief at the Cape felt able to warn the Senior Naval Officer, East Africa, that a vessel, probably a raider, had laid mines off Cape Town, and might be expected to do the same thing off Durban, Delagoa Bay and the east coast ports.

When the position was grasped the *Wolf* was somewhere in mid-ocean, on her way to Colombo, and our forces available for operating against the raider and for securing our lines of communication were disposed as follows :

#### 1. THE CAPE COMMAND

*Kent* (9,800 tons; 22 knots; fourteen 6"). On escort duty between Devonport and Sierra Leone.

*Hyacinth* (5,800 tons; 18 knots; eleven 6"). At Simonstown.

##### *East Africa Group.*

*Talbot* (5,800 tons; 17 knots; eleven 6"). At Kiswero.

*Challenger* (5,900 tons; 20 knots; eleven 6"). At Dar es Salaam.

*Rinaldo* (980 tons; 13 knots; four 4"). At Lindi.

*Thisle* (710 tons; 11 knots; two 4"). At Kilwa Kisiwani.

*Himalaya* (6,929 tons; 18 knots; eight 6"). On escort duty between Lindi and Durban.

*Princess* (8,684 tons; 14 knots; eight 6"). At Kiswero.

*Trent* (1,872 tons; 21 knots; two 12-pdr.). On passage Dar es Salaam to Durban.

*Mersey* (1,260 tons; 12 knots; three 6"). At Mohoro Bay.

*Severn* (1,260 tons; 12 knots; three 6"). At Durban.

#### 2. THE EAST INDIES COMMAND

##### (a) British Forces.

*Euryalus* (12,000 tons; 20 knots; two 9-2"; twelve 6". At Bombay, refitting.

*Pyramus* (2,135 tons; 17 knots; eight 4"). Movements unknown, as her log has been lost; probably Gulf of Aden.

*Fox* (4,360 tons; 17 knots; two 6"; eight 4-7"). At Port Sudan.

*Sapphire* (3,000 tons; 18-6 knots; twelve 4"). At Colombo, refitting.

*Dufferin* (Indian Marine). At Bombay in dry dock.

*Suva* (2,230 tons; 13 knots; three 4-7"). On passage Aden to Bombay.

*Enterprise* (armed launch). Central part of the Red Sea.

*Minto* (Indian Marine). Central part of the Red Sea.

*Hardinge* (Indian Marine). At Sherm Wej.

*Lunka* (2,193 tons; 16 knots; one 6"). At Suez.

*Lama* (2,198 tons; 16 knots; three 4"). At Rabegh.

*Perth* (2,058 tons; 15 knots; three 4-7"). At Perim.

*Northbrook* (Indian Marine). At Yenbo.

*Ohio* (1,070 tons; 13 knots; six 4"). At Kamaran.

*Odin* (1,070 tons; 13 knots; four 4"). At Aden.

*Minerva* (5,600 tons; 19 knots; eleven 6"). On passage Aden to Zanzibar.

*Britomart* (900 tons; 10 knots; two 4"). At Bombay, refitting.

*Bramble* (710 tons; 14 knots; two 4"). At Bushire.

*Philomel* (2,575 tons; 19 knots; eight 4·7"). On passage Muscat to Bombay.

*Juno* (5,600 tons; 20 knots; eleven 6"). At Muscat.

(b) French Forces.

*Pothuau* (5,374 tons; 19 knots; two 7·6"; ten 5·8").

*D'Entrecasteaux* (7,995 tons; 17·2 knots; two 9·4"; twelve 5·5").

*D'Estrees* (2,421 tons; 18·3 knots; two 5·5"; four 3·9").

3. THE CHINA COMMAND

(a) British Forces.

*Psyche* (2,135 tons; 20 knots; six 4"). Doubtful; log has been lost.

*Faniome* (1,070 tons; twelve knots; two 3-pdr.). At sea, Sandakan to Singapore.

*Cadmus* (1,070 tons; 13 knots; six 4"). On passage from Jesselton to Singapore for refit.

*City of London* (8,917 tons; 15 knots; eight 6"). At Colombo.

*Venus* (5,600 tons; 20 knots; eleven 6"). At Singapore.

*Diana* (5,600 tons; 20 knots; eleven 6"). On patrol off Singapore.

*Fame* (destroyer; 340 tons). Doubtful; log has been lost.

*Rosario* (submarine depot ship). At Hong Kong.

*Virago* (destroyer; 395 tons). Doubtful; log has been lost.

*Whiting* (destroyer; 390 tons). At Hong Kong, in dry dock.

*Huon* (Australian destroyer; 700 tons). At Jesselton.

*Torrens* (Australian destroyer; 700 tons). On patrol off Singapore.

*Swan* (Australian destroyer; 700 tons). On patrol off Singapore.

(b) Japanese Forces.

*Suma* (2,700 tons; 20 knots; two 6"; six 4·7"). On passage to Singapore.

*Nisitaka* (3,420 tons; 20 knots; six 6"). At Singapore, preparing for voyage to Mediterranean.

*Akashi* (2,800 tons; 19 knots; two 8"; six 4·7"). On passage to Singapore, preparing for voyage to Mediterranean.

*Tsushima* (3,420 tons; 20 knots; six 6"). On passage from Japan to Singapore.

*Katsura* (destroyer; 665 tons).

*Kayede* " " } At Singapore, preparing for voyage to the  
*Ume* " " } Mediterranean.  
*Kusunoki* " " }

This list, numbering fifty-five ships in all, seems to represent a very powerful and widespread combination for the interception of a single raider; but to an eye familiar with the vast spaces of the sea, the immediate suggestion is of the opposite kind. From the first it was obvious that we could not protect every vital point with the forces at our disposal; and the Admiralty's first care was to send out reinforcements. The *Newcastle*, which was on her way from Mudros to the East Indies at the time, was allotted to the Colombo patrol

(February 7); and the Japanese Government agreed to strengthen the Cape squadron with their two cruisers the *Niitaka* and *Tsushima* (February 13). The French Government were asked to place the *D'Estrees*, the *Pothuau* and the *D'Entrecasteaux* at our disposal; and, as a temporary measure, the French Admiral at Djibouti agreed to keep two of them continually off the port, so that they could be detached to Admiral Wemyss's command at a moment's notice.

For the moment the trade routes in the Far East were not threatened; but Admiral Grant's anxieties were heavy. There were German steamers in Tarakan, Balikpapan, Macassar and the Java ports, and for all he knew the raider's main object might be to penetrate into the eastern archipelago and arm them all. He therefore ordered the sloop *Fantome* to watch Sandakan and the northern end of the Macassar Straits, and told the *Venus* to visit Macassar.<sup>1</sup> This was the best he could do; but, as he himself admitted, it left Amboina and the ports to the east uncovered.

The minefield off Cape Agulhas was discovered on February 10, and seven days later the *Worcestershire* struck a mine off Colombo and sank. The authorities were, however, still doubtful as to the cause of the casualties: Admiral Wemyss appears to have been practically certain that a raiding mine-layer was at work; but the local authorities reported, as they had done at Cape Town, that the ships might have been lost from internal explosions. On February 21, Admiral Wemyss heard that Bombay had been mined, and this seems to have decided him; for, on the following day, he telegraphed that he had established a patrol at the entrance to the Persian Gulf, and the Straits of Bab-el-Mandeb, and that the Government of India had started methodical minesweeping off Karachi, Madras, Calcutta and Rangoon. The *Sapphire*, which was under orders to return to Aden, he now ordered to remain at Colombo and patrol the western approaches. Having made these dispositions, he wired to the Admiralty to say he could not believe that a submarine had been operating off Colombo, though many others were sure of it; and he asked whether the Naval Staff were of opinion that a raider was operating in the Indian Ocean or not. The Admiralty did not feel that they could answer definitely, but said that there might well be a raider in the Indian Ocean and that such precautions as were possible should be taken.

A few days after this telegram was sent cut all doubts

<sup>1</sup> He stated, in his letter to the Admiralty, that he also ordered the *Huon* to Sandakan; actually, the *Huon* arrived at Singapore on January 3 and worked on the Brothers patrol until the end of the month.

were ended. After mining Colombo and Bombay, Captain Nerger turned westwards, and took up a position between Aden and Colombo, on what he probably believed to be the main shipping route, and, but for the measures in force, he would very likely have done considerable damage. As it was, he only captured two ships in a week, the *Turritella* and the *Jumna*. He decided that the first of these could be fitted out as an auxiliary minelayer, and so, having put a prize crew on board, and armed her with a small gun, he ordered Lieutenant Brandes to take charge of her and mine the approaches to Aden : her captured crew were Chinese, and had no objection to working under their new masters. When these arrangements were complete, Lieutenant Brandes made off towards Aden, whilst Captain Nerger held his position about half-way between Colombo and Sokotra. The two vessels seem to have parted company some time during the evening of February 27.

The *Turritella*'s career as a warship was neither long nor fortunate. Only five days later the commanding officer of the sloop *Odin*, which was then lying at Aden, was told by the senior officer to search the approaches to the port, in order to see whether the town had been properly darkened. At about twenty minutes to ten the *Odin* was some six miles to the south of the entrance to Aden, when she sighted a ship, which was showing no lights, and was steering on a westerly course at about 11 knots. The sky was clear and the moon was near full, so that it was easy to watch and follow her. Some time after ten o'clock, Lieutenant-Commander Palmer asked the strange ship, by signal, where she was going and for what purpose; and, as the answer was made in rather peculiar English, and with a certain amount of hesitation, he became suspicious and ordered her to stop. The steamer answered this order by a signal which ran, "Why did you not stop me when I passed Aten? Meadows, master." This second message seemed to Lieutenant-Commander Palmer even more peculiar than the first : on the one hand it was a perfectly natural reply for a British merchant captain to make, if—as this man had stated—he thought he was being followed by a German raider; but, on the other hand, why was Aden wrongly spelt? On the whole, it confirmed his previous suspicions. "I had now been in pursuit for some considerable time, and, if he were a British merchantman, he must have known that it was most unlikely that a German raider would go on chasing him without firing." Lieutenant-Commander Palmer therefore held on after her, and signalled his course and speed to all ships on the patrol. During the morning

watch the chase, which was in fact the *Turritella*, began to ease down, and a signal was made to her to say that, if she did not stop, the *Odin* would open fire. It was now half-past four in the morning; but soon after the moon set, and for the next hour it was very dark. Lieutenant-Commander Palmer therefore kept the chase in the beam of his searchlight until dawn. Daylight came up very fast, and at a quarter to six, just as a boat was going to be lowered from the *Odin*, it was seen that the stranger's boats were already in the water: a few minutes later two loud explosions were heard aboard her, and she was seen to be settling down. After this not much explanation was needed from the recaptured Chinese crew; and within a few hours a general warning was being sent to all shipping afloat to let them know that there was a raider in the Indian Ocean. Captain Nerger, lying in wait on the trade route a few hundreds of miles away, took in the Admiralty's warning, and after cursing the Chinaman's invariable fidelity to the interests of his *de facto* masters, acknowledged, regretfully, that the description of the *Wolf* and her seaplane was singularly accurate.

Seeing that we were at last on his track, he now decided to leave the Indian Ocean for a time, and made towards Australia, on a course which took him to the westward of the Chagos archipelago through the most deserted part of the Indian Ocean. He captured the *Wordsworth* (3,509 tons) on March 11, and a sailing ship, the *Dee*, nearly three weeks later, in a position about 600 miles to the west of the Leeuwin. He was, by then, anxious about his coal supplies, and made to the south of Tasmania, hoping to pick up grain ships and colliers; he was disappointed in each case, for as soon as we knew positively that a raider was at work, all wheat transports were ordered to go through the Panama Canal. On May 22 the *Wolf* was anchored at Sunday Island in the Kermadecs, with her coal supply running low and her engines and boilers in need of an overhaul.

The stay at the Kermadecs brings the first part of Captain Nerger's raid to an end; and as he never once came near the areas where we concentrated our watching forces, our counter dispositions can be dealt with briefly.

On receiving news of the sinking of the *Turritella*, the Admiralty stopped all troopships in the Indian Ocean, and gave orders that those at sea on their way to Colombo should be met and escorted; after which Admirals Wemyss and Charlton were ordered to escort all troop transports and supply ships on their way to the Persian Gulf or East Africa. Admiral Grant was then warned that low-powered cruisers

and sloops like the *Psyche*, or the *Fantome*, should not be risked singly against the *Wolf*, as she would probably overpower them with her fifteen-centimetre armament. On March 9 the Commander-in-Chief, East Indies, was told that the cruisers *Doris* and *Topaze* and the old battleship *Exmouth* would reinforce his flag. By an arrangement with the Japanese Government the cruiser *Akashi* and eight destroyers were to be sent to the Mediterranean station. These ships were due to leave Singapore on March 11; and the Japanese undertook to spread them over a wide front and make a regular sweep on his way to Colombo. The cruisers *Tsushima* and *Niitaka*, which were to have gone to the Cape, were ordered to work under Admiral Wemyss when their reliefs arrived at Singapore.

Admiral Grant's chief difficulty was to make the Malacca Straits, which he described as a "main artery 640 miles long, admirably suited to minelaying," as safe as he could. To do this, he had to keep all his destroyers within the Straits, which, naturally, restricted his operations elsewhere. He was, moreover, ordered by the Admiralty to keep a permanent watch over the Sunda Straits, and had to detach the *City of London* for the purpose.

The most important consequence of the raid was that whilst the *Wolf* was at large and unlocated we were compelled to convoy all transport. The first transport line was from Fremantle to Colombo, and thence to the Red Sea; the second from Fremantle to the Cape, and the third from Bombay to the Persian Gulf. This new demand came near to absorbing all our available forces and compelled us to make heavy calls upon our allies the Japanese.

Early in March Admiral Oguri, the Japanese commander at Singapore, had under his orders the light cruisers *Suma*, *Tsushima*, and *Niitaka*. The *Akashi* and eight 30-knot destroyers, the *Katsura*, *Kaede*, *Ume*, *Kusunoki*, *Sakaki*, *Matsu*, *Sugi*, and *Kashiwa*, were within the zone of his command, on their way to the Mediterranean. Late in March the British Government asked that the Japanese navy should detach two ships to patrol the Australia and New Zealand area, and should send the *Tsushima* and *Niitaka* to Mauritius; they further asked that the troop transports between Australia and Colombo should be escorted by four battleships or cruisers. The Japanese Government at once agreed to these proposals, and did rather more than was asked of them. The cruisers *Chikuma* and *Hirato* were constituted into a fourth squadron, and sent out to operate and protect allied commerce in the east coast of Australia.

and New Zealand area under the command of Rear-Admiral Yamaji. The *Tsushima* and *Niitaka* were sent to Mauritius to patrol; and the first detached squadron, reinforced by the *Nisshin* and *Kasuga*, took over the escort duties between Australia and Colombo. After carrying out their patrol duties at Mauritius during April and the first part of May, the *Tsushima* and the *Niitaka* became absorbed by escort duties between Mauritius and the Cape. This reorganisation left Admiral Oguri, at Singapore, with only one vessel—the *Suma*—under his command; he was, therefore, reinforced by the light cruisers *Yahagi*, *Tone* and *Idzumo*, and the destroyers *Kisaragi*, *Hibiki*, *Hatsushimo* and *Kamikaze*. By the assistance thus given the Japanese Government became the predominant partner in the Indian Ocean. The call for help and the scale on which it was given are a significant commentary upon the power of diversion possessed by a single raider.

By the end of March our available forces had adjusted themselves to the new situation, and were roughly disposed as follows :

(i) In the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden : the *Hardinge*, *Perth*, *Northbrook*, *Clio* and *Odin* were patrolling in the Gulf of Aden, and the Straits of Bab-el-Mandeb; the *Fox* was on escort duty between Aden, Colombo and Bombay.

(ii) In the Colombo and Bombay area : the *Pyramus* and the *Sapphire* were employed on the transport route between Colombo and Aden, the *Exmouth* and the *Juno* between Colombo and Bombay; the *Doris* was working between Fremantle and Mauritius, also on escort duty; whilst the *Diana* and the *Newcastle* maintained the patrol to the south of Ceylon. The *Euryalus* and the *Suva* were refitting.

(iii) To the east of Colombo : the *Venus*, the *Cadmus*, the *Fantome* and the destroyers *Huon*, *Swan*, *Torrens* and *Fame* were watching the southern end of the Malacca Straits; the *City of London* was at the Sunda Straits, and the *Psyche* was on escort duty between Rangoon and Calcutta. As has been said, the Admiralty gave an order that only vessels with sufficient gun-power to fight the *Wolf* successfully were to be employed on escort. So burdensome and exacting was the new duty that within a few weeks practically all cruisers which had the requisite strength were actually absorbed into the convoy system, and only the *Newcastle* and the sloops and destroyers were left patrolling the focal points.

During the month of April our forces were strengthened by the light cruisers *Gloucester* and *Brisbane*, which were detached from the Adriatic and Australia to the East Indies;

and by the seaplane carrier *Raven II*, which arrived in Colombo on April 1, and searched the Chagos archipelago and the Maldives during the month, under the escort of the French cruiser *Pothuau*. None of these measures told us anything of the *Wolf's* whereabouts or indeed brought in evidence of her bare existence; and we soon found that it was not possible to keep so many forces on the spot. On May 16 the *Newcastle* was ordered to the Adriatic, to replace the *Dartmouth*, which had been damaged in an action with the Austrian forces on the previous day; a week later the *Raven II* and the *Gloucester* were recalled; and on June 2 the Admiralty ordered that escorts need no longer be provided in the Indian Ocean, and between Australia, New Zealand and the Cape. For the next five and a half months, therefore, our ships simply performed the routine duties of the station, as not a word was heard of the *Wolf* or of what she was doing.

Captain Nerger was, none the less, actively at work during this long period of silence and uncertainty. Sunday Island, where he had anchored the *Wolf* for an overhaul, is an island upon which the New Zealand Government had once tried, but without success, to place settlers. The ruins of their farms and the enclosures to their properties are still there, although almost covered with scrub and jungle. The orange trees originally planted by the colonists seem to have flourished without cultivation—for the landing parties found them bearing fruit.

The island rises steeply from the sea. It is largely covered with forest or jungle, but where the slope is too steep for this, the carpet of foliage is broken by huge bluffs of basaltic rock, which rise sheer above the tops of the trees. Although a boat can land at several spots on the shore, the surf is always breaking on some part of the coast; and whenever the slightest wind gets up a ship has at once to get under way and go round to the lee side of the island to be out of the rollers. Whilst he stayed here, Captain Nerger did what he could for the prisoners, and allowed them to go away in the boats to fish, and to land with the hunting parties. Every day the seaplane called the *Wolf Cub* made a flight: on June 2 she reported an approaching steamer: the *Wolf* got under way and captured her, though, if her captain had ignored the threat to drop a bomb on his ship, she would in all likelihood have escaped, for the seaplane would probably have missed her; and as the German engineers had not completed their engine repairs, the *Wolf* could never have caught her. The captured ship was the *Wairuna*; and from her the raider got over a thousand tons of coal and large quantities of fresh provisions.

A fortnight later the schooner *Winslow* was captured and brought in. Captain Nerger was on the look-out for her—his wireless officer had taken in messages announcing her voyage about a month before.

It was not until June 22 that the *Wolf* was able to re-start her cruise, so that during four whole months Captain Nerger had sunk only four vessels: the *Wordsworth*, the *Dee*, the *Wairuna* and the *Winslow*. To this total should certainly be added the three large ships which struck mines off Bombay in June; but even with this allowance made the destruction was at a rate of less than one ship a fortnight, and the general disturbance to shipping practically nothing.

The remaining eight months of the *Wolf*'s cruise were even less successful. Three minefields were laid during the next fortnight: one at the Three Kings Island, another in the western approaches to Wellington, and a third off Gabo Island, the south-eastern point of Australia. They caused only two casualties, which occurred long after the mines had been laid, and were attributed to internal explosions.<sup>1</sup> From Gabo Island, Captain Nerger steered to the north-eastwards; and on August 6 stopped his ship about midway between the Solomon Islands and the Huon Gulf in New Guinea, to wait for the steamship *Matunga*, which he knew from intercepted wireless signals to be somewhere about. She was met and captured in due course; a prize crew was put on board her, and the two vessels steamed in company to an anchorage in Waigoe Island, off the north-western end of New Guinea, which they reached eight days later.

For the next twelve days the *Wolf* lay in a closely land-locked bay, clearing the *Matunga*. A dense tropical forest came down to the water's edge, and from time to time the natives pushed out from under the overhanging growth in their canoes, and came on board to barter fruit for knives and calico. Ashore the beach was thick with crocodiles; and in the evenings, when the noises of the ship had ceased, the screeching of the parrots almost drowned the human voice. The heat was intolerable and the prisoners suffered terribly.

Whilst the *Wolf* lay in the bay, a wild scare was started amongst the crew that the prisoners were breaking out, and for several minutes a group of armed men on deck kept up a fusillade at a number of crocodiles which they took to be escaped captives. Captain Nerger describes the incident as a joke; but in point of fact it had a deeper significance. The prisoners all state, that although Captain Nerger was

<sup>1</sup> In October it was realised that a minefield had been laid off Gabo Island, and that the s.s. *Cumberland* had sunk on it.

always courteous and considerate to them, his crew were not; and that he had to face a growing spirit of indiscipline amongst his men, who, on one occasion, went so far as to make a petition that the cruise should be brought to an end and the vessel taken into a neutral port.

In the forenoon of August 26 the *Wolf* got under way and steamed westward. On the night of September 2 she laid her last minefield in the eastern approaches to Singapore, almost within sight of one of our patrolling vessels. Captain Nerger then turned back, crossed the Java Sea, and re-entered the Indian Ocean through the Lombok Straits a few days later.

It was almost at this moment that our authorities were beginning to suspect his presence. The loss of the *Dee* and the schooner *Winslow* seem to have caused no comment; but the sudden disappearance of the *Wairuna* and the *Matunga* was another matter. Both carried cargoes, consigned, presumably, to important mercantile houses; the associations with which the ship and lading had been insured would not pay the claims without previous inquiry, and several important and influential persons were passengers in the *Matunga* when she was captured. The unexplained loss of two steamers was not enough, in itself, to make us decide on any special measures, or send out vessels to search; nevertheless, precautions were taken. On August 31 the Australian Government reported that a special system of look-outs had been set up in the Torres Straits, and that orders had been given to their cruiser *Encounter* to meet the Japanese cruisers *Hirado* and *Chikuma* at Rossel Islands, and make a combined search. Soon afterwards Admiral Grant sent the *Psyche* and *Fantome* to Thursday Island. They went there by way of Timor, and must have followed Captain Nerger through the Java Sea at a distance of about two or three days' steaming. The *Suffolk*, which was now on the station, was sent to search the Andaman and Nicobar Islands a few days later.

Early in the month the Navy Department at Melbourne wired home a summary of all the information which seemed to them to bear upon the raider's activity during the last few months. The document is an interesting record of the kind of intelligence upon which measures for the defence of trade have to be based during raiding operations. The Navy Board's appreciation was based upon twelve relevant facts : (i) the Canadian Government had reported a raider in the western approaches to the Panama Canal at the end of May : (ii) a burning derelict had been seen to the east of Christmas

Island on June 19; (iii) the *Wairuna* had disappeared on her way to San Francisco from Auckland; (iv), (v) and (vi) during July, wrecks and burning derelicts had been reported to the east and south-east of New Caledonia, and in the Central Pacific off Jarvis Island; (vii), (viii) and (ix) a suspicious steamer had been reported to the north of Port Macquarie on the last day of July, and again off the Laughlan Island and off the Rossel Islands during August; (x) the *Matunga* had disappeared when on a voyage from Rabaul; (xi) the loss of the *Cumberland*, though attributed to internal explosions, might quite well be due to a raider's minefield, and (xii) there was not (so far as was known) a single survivor from all this list of casualties and wrecks. The Navy Board at Melbourne added that the above reports, if plotted, suggested the course of the raider, which meant that in their opinion she had moved across the Pacific from east to west during May and July, and had operated in the Coral Sea between New Guinea and Australia during August.

The facts and the inferences drawn from them deserve to be examined. As far as one can tell, of the four wrecks and derelicts which were taken to be clues to the raider's whereabouts, not one was due to Captain Nerger of the *Wolf*, although the burning hulk to the east of Christmas Island may have been one of the *Seeadler*'s victims. The loss of the *Matunga* and the *Wairuna* were rightly attributed to the *Wolf*; whilst of the two suspicious steamers in the reports, one was very likely the *Wolf*, but the other, seen off Smoky Cape, most certainly was not. The deduction that the raider had worked from east to west showed that in the general uncertainty it was no longer possible to decide which of the casualties were due to the *Seeadler* and which to the *Wolf*. The inference that there had been a raider in or near the Coral Sea during August was correct; but it was not realised that it was useless to base dispositions upon information which was more than a month old.

As a result of this appreciation the Australian Government concentrated all available ships in what they conceived to be the affected area: on September 24 the *Brisbane* was sent to the Solomon Islands, the *Encounter* and *Hirado* to Fiji, and a request was made for assistance in watching the waters north of Rabaul.<sup>1</sup>

Whilst our ships were thus assembling in the New Guinea archipelago, Captain Nerger was several thousand miles

<sup>1</sup> The ships then guarding Australian waters, under direct orders from Melbourne, were the *Brisbane*, 5,400 tons, 25 knots, eight 6"; the *Encounter*, 5,880 tons, 21 knots, eleven 6", and four miscellaneous ships of low power.

away in the middle of the Indian Ocean. Some time late in September he reached the southern end of the Maldivian Islands, and anchored off the most deserted atoll he could find. On the 29th he appears to have been under way in the neighbourhood of One-and-a-half-degree Channel, when he captured the *Hitachi Maru*, a large Japanese steamer laden with a very valuable general cargo. Captain Tominaga made what resistance he could with his one gun, sent out calls for help, and only surrendered when twenty of his men had been killed and wounded by the *Wolf's* fire. The experience preyed terribly upon his mind; when he came aboard he avoided his fellow-prisoners, and sat brooding by himself, and, many weeks later, flung himself overboard, after writing a letter to Captain Nerger in which he said that he had sacrificed the lives of fourteen men by a resistance which had failed, and was therefore not fit to live.

The *Hitachi Maru* was not sunk at once, but taken to the atoll, and there gutted of all that Captain Nerger could make use of. On October 3 the two vessels were under way together, with most of the prisoners on board the *Hitachi Maru*.

From now onwards Captain Nerger's movements can be dealt with more briefly. After making a sweep up the western side of the Maldives, he turned to the south-west, and reached the Cargados Carajos group on October 20. Here typhoid and beriberi broke out amongst the Asiatic prisoners, and Captain Nerger gave orders that everybody should be inoculated. For the next three weeks the gutting of the *Hitachi Maru* continued, and on November 7 she was taken out to sea and sunk. Captain Nerger then cruised to and fro to the west of the Cargados Carajos, and, on November 10, he captured the Spanish vessel the *Igotz Mendi*, on her way from Lourenço Marques to Colombo with a cargo of coal. The two ships returned together to the Carajos, and there the crews worked feverishly day and night transferring the greater part of the coal. When this was done, the prisoners were put aboard the *Igotz Mendi*, and the two vessels made for the Cape separately. During their voyage home they sighted one another from time to time, and parted again after the commanding officers had exchanged signals. By December 2 both ships were in the Atlantic making for home. Captain Nerger had thus spent three months in the Indian Ocean since he had passed the Bali Strait in September; and during that long time had only succeeded in capturing two vessels.

The disturbance caused by the *Wolf's* second raid on the

eastern trade routes was as slight as the material damage. The disappearance of the two foreign steamers was evidence too vague for us to found any new dispositions upon it. The *Tsushima*, one of the Japanese cruisers at the Cape, did, it is true, search for the *Hitachi Maru* during October, but found nothing.<sup>1</sup>

The capture of Count von Luckner at Wakaya, on September 4, now for a time diverted attention. It was a whole week before the authorities could discover where his ship was. When they did so, it was clear to them that a considerable number of Germans, armed and able to do damage, were still at large in the Central Pacific; and in consequence all the Australian naval forces were concentrated in the Pacific during October. On the China and East Indies stations our ships carried on their ordinary patrolling duties throughout the month; but on November 12 our Naval Attaché at Tokio wired to the Commander-in-Chief, East Indies, to say that the Japanese Admiralty would like the Maldives to be searched, as they were now convinced that the *Hitachi Maru* had been wrecked, and that some trace of her would be found there.

This suggestion was, as we now know, unfounded; but it was in the circumstances a reasonable and prudent one, and as soon as we were able to act upon it, the veil of mystery which had covered the *Wolf's* movements for so long was lifted. On November 21 the French cruiser *D'Estrees*, which was working under the Commander-in-Chief, East Indies, arrived at Suvaduva atoll. The captain seems to have made his inquiries in a tactful but extremely business-like fashion. He interviewed the Sultan and all the natives whom he found to be trustworthy, and learned from them that two steamers had arrived in the atoll on October 1, and that, during a stay of from eight to twelve days, a seaplane had repeatedly gone up from one of the steamers and flown over the islands. The natives also said that the officers of both ships had mixed freely with them, and that they had believed them to be English.<sup>2</sup> As we knew positively that no British aeroplane had reconnoitred the Maldives since the visit of the *Raven II* and the *Potheau* in April, this information could only mean that the *Wolf* and the *Hitachi Maru* had been there. When this second tally-ho was

<sup>1</sup> She visited Simonstown, Bedeque, Delagoa Bay, Mozambique, Mahé, Mauritius and Durban.

<sup>2</sup> The C.-in-C., East Indies, sent away the *Juno* to carry out a further examination. She visited the islands on December 8 and confirmed the French captain's investigation.

sounded the forces available for the chase were disposed as follows :<sup>1</sup>

1. THE CAPE COMMAND

*Cape Town Group.*

*Hyacinth* : at Simonstown.

*Kent* : at Sierra Leone.

*Himalaya* : on passage Cape Town to St. Helena.

*Convoy Group.*

*Niitaka, Tushima* : on escort duty between Mauritius and the Cape.

*East African Group.*

*Challenger* : at sea, Dar es Salaam to Kilwa Kisiwani.

*Lunka* : on passage Majimbwa to Dar es Salaam.

*Minerva* : Kilwa Kisiwani.

*Talbot* : on passage Zanzibar to Seychelles.

*Rinaldo* : at Durban, refitting.

*Thisile* : Zanzibar.

*Trent* : doubtful; log has been lost.

*Mersey* : Lindi.

*Severn* : Kilwa Kisiwani.

2. THE EAST INDIES COMMAND

(a) *British Forces.*

*Espiègle* : on patrol off Kamaran.

*Chio* : Perim.

*Odin* : Suez, in dock.

*Suva* : on passage Suez to el Wej.

*Pyramus* : on passage Jeddah to Wej.

*Fox* : Aden.

*Topaze* : Aden.

*Hardinge* : Suez.

*Euryalus* : on passage Singapore to Hong Kong.

*Northbrook* : Rangoon.

*Doris* : Aden.

*Minto* : doubtful; log has been lost.

*Bramble* : Bombay.

*Juno* : Trincomali.

*Diana* : on her way to Singapore to rejoin her station.

*Venus* : Colombo.

*Sapphire* : Muscat.

(Note.—The *Dufferin*, *Azerbaijan* and *Lawrence* were in the Persian Gulf.)

(b) *French Forces.*

Doubtful, probably *D'Estrees*, *D'Entrecasteaux* and *Du Chayla*.

3. THE CHINA COMMAND

(a) *British Forces.*

*Suffolk* : at Hong Kong.

*City of London* } Java Sea.

*Fame*

<sup>1</sup> The changes in the composition of the forces at each command since the beginning of the raid have not been enumerated: they were due to various reasons, none of them connected with the *Wolf*.

*Cadmus*  
*Whiting*  
*Virago*  
*Rosario*

} at Hong Kong.

(b) *Japanese Forces.*

*Yakumo* (9,646 tons; 20 knots; four 8"). Singapore.

*Kasuga* (7,628 tons; 20 knots; one 10"; two 8"). Singapore.

*Yodo* (despatch vessel; two 4.7"). Singapore.

*Yahagi* (4,950 tons; 26 knots; eight 6"). Fremantle.

*Suma*: Penang.

*Shigure*

*Harukaze*

*Hatsuhara*

*Hatsuyuki*

} (destroyers), patrolling the Malacca Straits.

Upon these dispositions the news from the Maldives had an immediate effect. On December 2 the *Venus* was sent to the Chagos archipelago, and the *Juno* to the Maldives. During the following week the Commander-in-Chief, East Indies, put all the transports within his command under escort, and ordered the *Du Chatla* to patrol the parallel of 10° N. between the African coast and a point 200 miles from it; the *Doris* was directed to patrol the Gulf of Aden, and the *Dufferin* and the *Sapphire* to watch the route between Karachi and Muscat. Until further information came in he did not feel at liberty to do more; and his measures need not be here examined, for by the time they were put into effect the *Wolf* was well out into the Atlantic. It is enough to note that they are a significant example of the immediate effect of positive news upon a hitherto vague situation.

Captain Nerger made for home through the Central Atlantic. Believing the Island of Trinidad to be uninhabited, he intended to anchor off it, and coal from the *Igotz Mendi*; but, as the *Wolf* approached the island, an intercepted wireless message from the Brazilian Admiralty to the governor of the island warned Nerger in time that he had made a serious miscalculation. He therefore made off, and coaled from the *Igotz Mendi* in a heavy swell, somewhere in mid-ocean. The difficulties were so great that the two ships were in company for five whole days, trying to tranship the coal; when they parted and steamed north, both were damaged. The *Wolf* and the *Igotz Mendi* now steered far to the north, and were, at one time, in such severe weather that the *Wolf* was in danger of foundering. The two ships parted company for the last time on the evening of February 6.

The *Igotz Mendi* now made a fruitless attempt to go round the north of Iceland, and, after failing and being obliged to retrace her course, ran ashore on the Skaw, on February 24,

and was taken in charge by the Danish authorities. Neger was more fortunate, and he at last reached Germany on February 19, 1918, after keeping the sea for fourteen and a half months.<sup>1</sup> He had a great reception in Berlin, where he was marched through the streets at the head of his crew with a guard of honour to escort him.

The three raiding captains had distinguished themselves by energy, ingenuity and humanity : they had given a great deal of trouble to our cruisers and had evaded the net for an unexpectedly long time : it is not surprising that the admiration they gained by their adventures concealed their failure to carry out the orders of those who had sent them to sea. They were to interfere with our shipping ; but the longer they were out the less successful they were in doing this. The *Moewe* in the four and a half months to March 1917 sank twenty vessels : the *Seeadler* in the seven months to August, only ten ; and the *Wolf* only twelve in her cruise of fourteen and a half months to February 1918. For us, with our immense shipping list, these were unimportant losses ; for the German Government they were showy incidents in a futile operation. The interference which they had aimed at was presumably such as raiders may effect by setting up a panic, or at the least a feeling of uncertainty, in great ports of shipment, so that masters refuse to sail, bankers withhold trade credits, wharves, warehouses and railway sidings become congested with goods which cannot be transported ; and as the result of all this, economic and strategic arrangements are broken down or dangerously delayed. No such dislocation was effected even to the smallest degree by the German raiders, and the steadily progressive nature of their failure would seem to indicate either that the effort was ill-timed, or that it was ill-designed. On the first point it may be noted that raiding operations of this kind can hardly be expected to produce any serious effect except in times of scarcity or strain. The autumn of 1916 was not in this respect a very favourable moment : the British public had by now become inured to sudden calamities and deferred hopes ; the really grave menace of the submarine campaign was being faced with calm resolution, and our mercantile marine was showing an actually embarrassing indifference to danger. It is just conceivable that if the successes of the raiders had been very numerous in the East, if, for example, the Indian ports had witnessed the frequent arrival of shiploads of released prisoners with dismal tales to tell, our prestige might have been

<sup>1</sup> He had no cordon to evade on his return : the British blockade cruisers had been withdrawn in December 1917.

injured and disaffected sections of the people might have been excited by dangerous tides of feeling. But if any such hopes were entertained in Germany, they too were ill-timed : India was throughout the war a source of disappointment to our opponents.

On the other hand, it may be suggested that the proposed interference with shipping covered a wider intention, and that the raiders' surface attack was auxiliary to the submarine onslaught on our shipping in home waters. If so it was, of course, rightly timed ; but it was none the less ineffectual. It made a long call upon the activity of our cruisers in distant waters, and to some extent interfered with the routine already in force ; but in the main its effect was rather to divert these ships from their station than from their purpose. A German success could only have been attained if the attacks had been more prolonged and more intense : if, for example, our trade routes in each ocean had been threatened by six raiders instead of one, and our power of convoying transport in the Atlantic and Indian Oceans had been thereby diminished. The question then arises whether groups of four, five or six raiders would have escaped the net so successfully as single ships. It is noteworthy that the German Admiralty, who can hardly have failed to consider the point, did not instruct the captains of the *Moewe*, the *Seeadler* and the *Wolf* to act upon any combined plan, but sent them out as isolated and independent marauders. It is clear that they were throughout ignorant of each other's intentions and whereabouts. For several days Luckner was operating in the same area as zu Dohna without being aware of the fact ; and when captured he swore that he knew nothing of Nerger's cruise in the Indian Ocean. Nerger seems to have known that Luckner was at sea ; but there was not between them even the simplest plan of collaboration, or Luckner and his crew might have been saved from falling into our hands after their shipwreck. Again, if the three commanders had been able to compare notes about fruitful and dangerous areas, and if zu Dohna's booty had been available for the other two to share, they might have made use of the resources gained in the Atlantic for supporting a combined attack on the Indian trade routes. The evidence then all seems to point to the conclusion that the instructions given to the raiding captains did not include, perhaps expressly excluded, any attempt at collaboration between them. The motive may have been the anxiety to preserve secrecy, or to avoid misunderstandings ; and this, again, may have been well or ill judged ; but the officers themselves are

not concerned. If they only caused us inconvenience when they might have done real damage, the fault lies not with them but with the High Command, which sent them on a vast enterprise with hopelessly inadequate means.

The working out of our own problem seems at first sight to present a precisely opposite aspect: we were possessed of gigantic means and yet failed apparently to crush three insignificant challengers. Very little examination, however, is needed to show that the problem was at any rate attacked on sound principles, and that to this was due the fact that the raiders, though not actually destroyed, were deprived of any but a limited and ineffectual success. There are only two sound methods of searching for an enemy at sea; he must be looked for either at his starting-point or alongside his objective. On this occasion both were tried. The first proved impracticable because we could never obtain accurate information of the raider's starting-point, which, it must be remembered, is a point of time as well as of space. The second method was put in operation more and more rapidly and completely as the weeks passed, by the dispositions we have been describing; a system of routeing and patrolling was set up which was practically equivalent to convoy. The result was that the raiders could no longer approach their objective without imminent risk of finding themselves under the pursuer's guns, and the number of their captures fell rapidly towards vanishing point: the two survivors went home because there was no longer anything raidable for them to live on.

## CHAPTER VII

### GERMAN NAVAL POLICY, 1916-1917

#### 1

ALTHOUGH the concessions to America in April 1916 had been much criticised in Germany, the nation had, on the whole, thought it wise to make them.<sup>1</sup> Less than a year later, the country was resounding with a clamour for unrestricted warfare so violent and unanimous that no Government could have resisted it. Ministers of State changed their opinions as radically as the populace: those who, at the beginning, had favoured concession and restraint, were quite ready, at the close, to support the policy of attacking the commerce of all nations, whether neutral or belligerent. The group of public men who remained unconvinced of anything but the risks involved was very small; they took little trouble to put forward their views in public, and when they did so, their voices were lost in the cry for unrestricted submarine warfare which rose from every part of Germany.

This change of opinion sprang, no doubt, from many causes, some of which are too subtle and deeply hidden to be traced here; but among them we can certainly name four of importance. First, there was the unswerving conviction of the Naval Staff that the submarine fleet could end the war in a German victory; second, the reinstating, during 1916, of a campaign against commerce so successful that it seemed very difficult to refuse those who directed it the additional freedom for which they asked; third, the failure of the peace negotiations; and fourth, the indefinite and hesitating way in which the few political opponents of submarine war expressed themselves.

The decision to accede to America's demands in April 1916 had only been taken after an acute struggle behind the scenes in which the Chancellor and the military leaders were sharply opposed. When the crisis passed, the difference of outlook between the two groups only became more marked, and the divisions of the German Government more sharply thrown up against the darkening horizon.

The Chancellor and his assistant, Karl Helfferich, were

<sup>1</sup> See Vol. III., p. 312.

avowedly the heads of a peace party.<sup>1</sup> They were supported by Jagow, a strenuous opponent of submarine warfare, and by Count Bernstorff, who knew, from his residence in Washington, that the American nation could make war effectively if ever it chose to do so, a point which the professional soldiers of Germany, the most highly trained in Europe, could never grasp. These four, then, Bethmann Hollweg, Helfferich, Jagow and Bernstorff, were convinced that Germany's interests would be best served by negotiating an early peace on a fairly conciliatory basis, and foresaw that a renewal of unrestricted submarine warfare would defeat their policy, because it would turn America from a probable mediator into a certain enemy.

General von Falkenhayn was, at the time, the Chancellor's chief opponent. He was still Chief of the General Staff, and had a position equal to the Chancellor's in the Imperial Council; but the campaign against Verdun was bringing his reputation to shipwreck. It followed, therefore, that although he continued to advocate unrestricted submarine warfare as the only measure likely to break down the military deadlock, he could only throw the weight of a declining influence into the controversy, and his attitude can hardly have affected the Government's decision.

The German public had not yet definitely made up its mind about the submarine campaign. Certain very powerful private associations, such as the Bund der Landwirte<sup>2</sup> and the Zentral Verband Deutscher Industrieller,<sup>3</sup> supported the clamour for resuming submarine war without restraint or concession. Prince Salm, the President of the Navy League, was proclaiming that it would be very greatly to Germany's advantage if America did enter the war against her; and Admiral von Tirpitz, now out of office, was striving to bring the Press and the public to his own way of thinking. His authority with the general public was very great; Erzberger likens his influence over the German masses to the fatal charm of the piper of Hamelin's music.<sup>4</sup> This, however, is a bitter reflection from a man who had been persistently overruled and misinformed. The vigorous campaign of propaganda undertaken by the navy throughout the year proves that large sections of the nation had still to be convinced, and that, in the meantime, they were content that the Government should hold their hand.

<sup>1</sup> Erzberger, *Erlebnisse im Weltkriege*, p. 219.

<sup>2</sup> League of Landowners.

<sup>3</sup> Central Association of German Industrialists.

<sup>4</sup> Erzberger, pp. 210-11.

The two sides of the question were never fairly presented to the unpersuaded mass of Germans. The naval censorship was originally in the hands of the Admiralty, and not of the Naval Staff. So long as this arrangement continued, Admiral von Tirpitz and his assistants were free to spread their views, and to suppress all contrary opinions; and they appear to have used their advantage. During 1915, secret and official memoranda, prepared by Tirpitz, were frequently communicated to private persons; whilst a paper written in good faith by an industrial magnate, who wished to warn the nation about the dangers of submarine war, was held up until the first declaration had been issued.<sup>1</sup> The Chancellor succeeded in transferring the naval censorship from the Admiralty to the Naval Staff; but it was just as unfairly exercised by its new controllers as it had been by the old. If there was anybody in the German Empire which ought to have been informed of both sides of the controversy, it was the Bundesrat,<sup>2</sup> or Federal Council—the connecting link between the Imperial Government and the States of the Union; yet the Naval Staff injected their convictions into every crevice of the public structure with such ruthlessness that the naval representative who reported on the position to the Bundesrat, during the summer of 1916, produced figures so inaccurate that the Chancellor had to send telegrams to every part of Germany to contradict the information supplied.<sup>3</sup>

It was the Chancellor's peculiar misfortune that the controversy seemed to be straining and shaking into incoherence all that was loosely knit in the construction of Imperial Germany. Parliamentary opinion was quite uncertain, for in February 1916 the Prussian Lower House had passed a resolution in favour of unrestricted submarine warfare without consulting or warning the Government; and the Reichstag was equally capable of springing a surprise motion beneath the feet of the Executive. Apart from this, the coming debate could not fail to set up the strain of an acute constitutional quarrel. Was the resumption of submarine war a political or a military question? In the first case the responsibility of advising lay with the Chancellor; in the second with the Chief of the Staff. But human affairs do not always arrange

<sup>1</sup> *Verhandlungen des Untersuchungsausschusses*, pp. 362-3.

<sup>2</sup> The Bundesrat is described by a German constitutional lawyer as the "body which carries the sovereign power of the Empire"; another describes it as a "congress of ambassadors of the federal kingdoms" (Gebhardt, *Vertagung des Deutschen Reichs*, p. 94). Prussia sent to it seventeen representatives; Bavaria six; Baden and Alsace Lorraine three; Mecklenburg and Brunswick two; other principalities one.

<sup>3</sup> Bethmann Hollweg, *Betrachtungen zum Weltkriege*, Vol. II., p. 123.

themselves according to the departments of the German administration, and it so happened that the submarine question was both political and military. The result was a deadlock : the military leaders claimed that the question was exclusively theirs, and Bethmann Hollweg firmly insisted that a matter affecting the Empire's international relations could not be decided without the Chancellor. It was obviously impossible to strike a compromise between opinions which were so radically opposed ; the deadlock could only be ended by a personal decision of the Emperor, and we shall see presently by what desperate device this constitutional necessity was evaded.

The naval officers of the High Command were agreed on the general principle of re-starting the submarine campaign as soon as they could ; but they by no means saw eye to eye about the best means of making their views prevail.

As he sailed to raid Lowestoft (April 24), Admiral Scheer recalled all submarines from the trade routes, and refused, from then onwards, to allow them to carry on commerce warfare according to the rules of international law ; yet those rules only were sanctioned by the promise which had been made to Washington.

A month later Jutland was fought. The German Commander-in-Chief at once used the increased prestige which his leadership had gained for him to press his views on the Emperor. His "idea" was that "the moral impression which this battle left on the neutral nations created a most favourable atmosphere for us to carry on the war against England by all possible means, and to resume the U-boat campaign in all its intensity." No more characteristic judgment was pronounced during the war—it is an extreme perversion of the Bismarckian theory of *imponderabilia*. The atmosphere created by the first reports of the Battle of Jutland was not only imponderable, it was evanescent. When it vanished, the true result of the battle became as clear as a well-drawn balance sheet. The High Seas Fleet had inflicted loss on a battle cruiser squadron and had escaped with its life from the Grand Fleet ; but the great experiment was over, and it had proved that the control of the sea was irrevocably in British hands. No moral impression—least of all a temporary one—could be of any value in face of a reality like this, a reality which became every day plainer to neutrals as well as to enemies. Tirpitz showed almost as faulty a judgment : he notes that "that engagement, victorious, though not fought to a finish, was unable, after nearly two years of the war, to achieve any lasting political result, in spite of our advantages in the battle itself; for in

the time that had elapsed, the general position had changed and settled too much in England's favour, and the countries that were still neutral had lost their belief in our ultimate victory." This estimate is more correct than Scheer's, for it marks the political result of the German account of Jutland as temporary and ineffectual; but it shows the Grand Admiral to be equally unable to distinguish words from the realities of war. Nothing in the two years had done more to change and settle the position in England's favour than the Battle of Jutland; for a superiority which had before been only demonstrable was there actually demonstrated.

The Naval Staff, however, had a better reason for demanding a renewal of the U-boat campaign, and this, too, was a reason based upon the result of Jutland. The failure of the High Seas Fleet left them no other weapon but the submarine. If the unrestricted campaign could not be risked, then they begged to be allowed a milder form of war, so as to inflict at least some injury on England. Admiral Scheer objected to any milder form, and the Chief of the Naval Cabinet, Müller, remonstrated with him in a letter dated June 23, 1916, arguing against his "everything or nothing" point of view. "I can fully sympathise with you, but the matter is, unfortunately, not so simple. We were forced, though with rage in our hearts, to make concessions to America, and in so doing to the neutrals in general; but, on the other hand, we cannot wholly renounce the small interruptions of trade . . . still possible in the Mediterranean. It is the thankless task of the Chief of the Naval Staff to try and find some way of making this possible in British waters as well." What is necessary is "a compromise between the harsh professional conception of the U-boat weapon and the general, political and military demands which the Chief of the Staff has to satisfy." The words "the harsh professional conception" are here strikingly apt, but they are not to be taken in a sympathetic sense, for the use of the weapon in question is only given up "with rage in our hearts."

This letter was followed a week later by a visit to Admiral Scheer from the Imperial Chancellor, who informed him that he was personally against an unrestricted U-boat campaign, because it would give rise to fresh troublesome incidents and "would place the fate of the German Empire in the hands of a U-boat commander." This made the Admiral extremely bitter: "So we did not wield our U-boat weapon as a sword which was certain to bring us victory, but (as my Chief of the Staff, Rear-Admiral von Trotha, put it) we used it as a soporific for the feelings of the nation, and presented the blunt

edge to the enemy." The people did not know that the campaign was only big talk and pretence; while "America laughed because she knew that it lay with her to determine how far we might go."

But Admiral Scheer, though short-sighted and violent, was shrewd enough to realise that he could not well remain in conflict with the civilian and naval elements of the Government at one and the same time. As he was divided from his naval colleagues only on a professional question, but from the Chancellor on a matter of policy, it was natural that he should yield to Holtzendorff and Müller. He denies in his book that he ever did yield. Admiral von Holtzendorff's plan of restricted submarine warfare was none the less put into force in the autumn of the year, and we hear no more of Admiral Scheer's opposition to it.

## 2

The Chancellor decided that the best issue from the difficulties which were encompassing both his country and himself was to press for American mediation. The decision was in a sense a wise one. He knew quite well that the Naval Staff and the High Command were only temporarily silenced; and he foresaw that the pressure they had already exerted upon him would be renewed before the year was out. If the temporary barrier which he had put up against a decision in favour of submarine war were blown down—he knew the structure of it was none too solid—he foresaw disaster and ruin. He did not believe that a "peace of victory" was any longer possible; but he did believe that a renewal of unrestricted submarine warfare would be the first move towards a peace made between a beaten Germany and an enormous coalition of victorious enemies; to secure American mediation was to secure the road to a compounded peace and to block the road to a new submarine campaign against neutral commerce. His decision to press the American Government to make a regular diplomatic move was thus outwardly a wise one; but had he known to what lengths the American Government was prepared to go to support the Allies, had he guessed what offers President Wilson had already made to the principal Allied Governments, Bethmann Hollweg would have hesitated to invite America's intervention, and would probably have withdrawn his opposition to unrestricted submarine warfare altogether; he might even have advised the military leaders that nothing but a crushing victory could end the war satisfactorily. This statement requires a little explanation.

During the year 1915, President Wilson had apparently realised that the war in Europe which had already involved many American interests would do so in an increasing degree, and that he would not be able to keep his country neutral if the struggle were much protracted. He had grounds of complaint against both groups of belligerents, but he seems to have made up his mind that his difficulties with Great Britain and the Entente were not comparable to his differences with the Central Powers, and that if America ever intervened it must be on the Allied side. These, however, were only his personal convictions and those of his most trusted adviser, Colonel House : he felt it his duty to keep them out of all his public and most of his private utterances, and to set an example of that neutral way of thinking and acting which he had invited his countrymen to follow. Probably most of the American nation hoped that the President would follow no settled plan but that of maintaining neutrality and of dealing with difficulties as they arose ; but President Wilson, who had a more intimate knowledge of what those difficulties were likely to be, and of the passions they might arouse, could not adopt such a policy as this. Its great and, to him, decisive disadvantage was that sooner or later it would probably bring him face to face with a difficulty which could only be settled by intervention ; and that if he had previously made neutrality the sole object of his policy, America would be taken by surprise and be forced to enter the war for no more inspiring object than the settlement of a diplomatic quarrel. After considerable hesitations and misgivings, therefore, he decided to try to strike an arrangement with the Entente Powers, and sent Colonel House to Europe on a special mission. The Colonel was instructed to prepare both belligerent groups for an American invitation to a peace conference ; but the invitation was to be presented to each group in very different colours. The Allies were to be informed that if the Germans refused reasonable terms of peace, and so broke up the conference to which they would be invited, America would at once enter the war on the Allied side and force the Central Powers to agree. The reasonable terms were to include the restoration of Belgium and Serbia, the cession of Alsace-Lorraine to France, of Constantinople to Russia, of the Italian-speaking section of Austria-Hungary to Italy, and the creation of an independent Polish State. Germany was to be compensated for loss of territory by concessions outside Europe, and both groups of belligerents were to give guarantees against undertaking aggressive war by disarming, and were also to join a general league for enforcing

peace. This offer, which in Colonel House's view was practically an offer of American help to the Allies, was communicated to British and French Ministers in January 1916. Sir Edward Grey and several other Ministers received it well, Monsieur Briand more guardedly; and no answer was given.

This proposed mediation could obviously only be put before the German Ministers in a careful disguise. When Colonel House was in Berlin—which he visited at the end of January—he probably gave the German Government to understand that both groups of belligerents would be invited by America to meet in conference and then left to discuss territorial questions and indemnities between themselves, and that the American Government would stand aside and concern itself merely with a conference upon disarmament and the creation of a league for enforcing peace. This, at all events, is what Count Bernstorff understood by American mediation.

Upon this proposal the German Ministers did not commit themselves to any very definite expression of opinion; but the Chancellor does not seem to have suspected what the American intentions really were, and he discussed the question of American mediation with Colonel House in a friendly way. On the other hand, Bethmann Hollweg, Zimmermann and Jagow satisfied Colonel House that there was not the slightest hope of the Central Empires agreeing to the terms of peace which he and the President considered reasonable. The Colonel therefore returned to London in February quite convinced that American mediation must be followed by American intervention.

He was back in America early in March, and after consulting with the President, he seems to have asked Sir Edward Grey whether the Allies were ready to invite America to mediate on the conditions which he had recently offered. Sir Edward Grey replied that the British Government could not take the initiative in asking the French to attend a peace conference; and both Colonel House and President Wilson took this answer to mean that the American offer had been refused. Anglo-American relations, thereupon, became much less cordial; Count Bernstorff was quick to perceive this, but he never suspected the real reason.

Such then was the position when the German Foreign Minister instructed the Ambassador to press for American mediation. In a long telegram, sent on May 27, Count Bernstorff was instructed in the tangled and deceptive system he was to follow.

It was taken for granted that the President would strive to arrange for a peace on a *status quo ante* basis. As this would not be acceptable to Germany, the Ambassador was to prevent the American Government from making a positive proposal to the Central Powers; but to do so in a way which would "attain the object without endangering the relations between America and Germany."<sup>1</sup> The telegram shows the confusion which still reigned in high places in Germany and the extraordinary difficulties with which the Chancellor was faced. We have his own assurance, and that of his assistant, Karl Helfferich, that he would have been willing to accept a peace on a *status quo ante* basis;<sup>2</sup> but, as he did not dare to express his views openly, he was committing the Ambassador to a policy opposed to the one which he really desired to pursue.

Count Bernstorff answered at once that it was quite impossible for him to prevent the President from mediating when and how he liked; but his reply went further.<sup>3</sup> He was quick to see that some unrevealed purpose lay behind instructions so badly drawn and contradictory, and he warned his Government in the clearest possible language against hoping to get America's consent to a renewal of the submarine campaign if the Entente Powers declined the President's mediation (July 13, 1916).

The Chancellor's tortuous instructions were evidence of the very great difficulties of his position. Count Bernstorff realised, at an early period of the controversy, that the whole matter was, as he put it, a race between peace negotiations and unrestricted submarine war. This was a frank view and a clear-sighted one; it was, no doubt, a view which would be shared by the Chancellor. His last instructions to Bernstorff were thus, in a sense, a step forward. He might have made other such steps had not an event occurred which seriously weakened his position.

## 3

On August 27, Rumania entered the war against the Central Powers. The appearance of a new opponent caused a deep sensation in Germany. Austria had already very nearly succumbed under the onslaughts of Brusilof's armies

<sup>1</sup> Bernstorff, *My Three Years in America*, p. 237.

<sup>2</sup> Helfferich, *Der Weltkrieg*, Vol. II., p. 299.

<sup>3</sup> Bernstorff, p. 240.

in Galicia, and now a new enemy was on her flank. It was obvious that the danger was pressing and that a tremendous effort was necessary to avert it. The Government acted promptly. Within two days Field-Marshal von Hindenburg was appointed Chief of the Great General Staff, with his assistant, Ludendorff, as Quartermaster-General; and within a few weeks steps were being taken to roll back the Rumanian invasion of Hungary.

We shall see later the real significance and importance of this appointment. Marshal von Hindenburg was not made a "military dictator," for the duties of his office were unchanged; nor did his appointment imply a victory for the conservative parties in the Reichstag or the Prussian Landtag. Nevertheless, the consequences of his assuming office did, in the end, paralyse the civil advisers of the Emperor and reduce even the Head of the State himself to the mere function of proclaiming the decisions of his Chief of Staff.

The explanation of this astonishing development lies deep in the history and character of the German people. Their traditions and their laws all tended to make them believe that salvation from great danger can only come from the effort of one great man; and now everything combined to point out Hindenburg as the man in whose power it was to save the country from the final danger. His military talents might not be greater than Mackensen's or Falkenhayn's, but it had fallen to him to turn back the tide of Russian invasion in 1914; and the utter defeat of the Russian armies in the year following was generally attributed to him. He had thus freed his countrymen from a nightmare which had been haunting them for a whole generation, and, rightly or wrongly, the German people regarded him as their only possible deliverer from the traditional Cossack terror.

Bethmann Hollweg fully understood the significance of Hindenburg's arrival at Great Headquarters. It was not, he said, that any new powers were granted to the new Chief of the General Staff; but simply that no Government which was known to be opposing the views of the new military chief could have withstood the popular indignation.<sup>1</sup>

The effects of the appointment upon parliamentary opinion were equally deep. Throughout the war, the Government had relied largely for support upon the influence of the Centre Party in the Reichstag. Its help had always been loyally given. When the submarine controversy had raged at the time of the *Sussex* crisis, the party chiefs had seen to it that there should be no majority in favour of submarine war.

<sup>1</sup> *Verhandlungen des Untersuchungsausschusses*, pp. 144, 148.

Since then, they had never committed themselves to a hard-and-fast statement. But when the new Chief of Staff took office, the Chancellor realised that their attitude was no longer so reliable: "The Centre Party now renounced their old tradition and claimed a free hand."

As soon as Hindenburg had taken up his appointment, a general conference of ministers, army and navy leaders assembled at Pless. The first and, as far as we know, the only item on the agenda was the question of resuming unrestricted submarine warfare. Should the German navy, in fact, be allowed to assist by every means in its power in the impending effort to avert the new danger? There were present Hindenburg; Ludendorff, who was now Quarter-master-General; General Wild von Hohenborn, War Minister; Admirals von Capelle (Secretary of the Navy), von Holtzendorff (Chief of the Admiralty Staff), and Koch; Bethmann Hollweg, Imperial Chancellor; Helfferich, Minister of the Interior; and Jagow, Minister for Foreign Affairs; with Baron von Grünau as Secretary.

Admiral von Holtzendorff opened the discussion, and read from a carefully prepared paper. His main argument was directed against those who opposed unrestricted submarine war on the grounds that it would involve war with the United States. The Government at Washington might indeed declare war; but what could they do as a belligerent? They would have no spare tonnage with which to assist the Entente, and their attitude could hardly affect other neutrals. Holland would declare war against the first Power that violated her territory, Denmark would remain neutral; the South American States could do nothing against U-boat warfare, for they had not enough shipping to carry away their grain harvests. In a few months, the last vestiges of German international commerce would be gone. Could Turkey, Bulgaria and Austria-Hungary bear another winter of war? "I do not see a *finis Germaniae* in the use of the weapon which cripples Great Britain's capacity to support her Allies; but rather in the neglect to employ it."

The Foreign Minister, Jagow, strove to prove the wrongness of the Admiral's political outlook. If the United States entered the war, the effect on neutrals would be incalculable. "Germany will be treated like a mad dog against which everybody combines." When unrestricted submarine war had first been started, neutrals had been thoroughly disturbed. There was no comparison possible between English and German pressure upon neutral States. Great Britain did not touch individuals: she worked upon associations and trading

combines, who served her purposes by freely electing to do so, in return for special advantages. The German method destroyed ships and took human life.

Karl Helfferich, the Minister of the Interior, continued the argument, and attacked the statistics upon which Holtzendorff had based his conclusions. Great Britain had 12½ million tons of shipping at her disposal; she employed a part of it to supply herself, and the remainder was engaged in the world's trade. Supposing that German submarines succeeded in reducing the 12½ million tons available, Great Britain would then simply withdraw some of her surplus shipping from general trade; and her destruction would be as far off as ever. Had Holtzendorff reflected, he asked, that Germany had supplied herself, and absorbed a considerable fraction of the world's carrying trade, with only 5 million tons of shipping? Why should not England, by foresight and economy, make a far smaller tonnage than she had hitherto disposed of suffice for her needs? The argument that America could do no harm even if she declared war was utterly unsound. "Up to the present, the Entente has borrowed 1,250 million dollars from the United States. If she declares war, America, with all her reserves, will be at the disposal of the Allies, for their cause will be hers." And finally, "I can see in the employment of the U-boat weapon nothing but catastrophe." Admiral von Capelle, on the other hand, proclaimed the conviction of the navy that nothing but the unrestricted U-boat war would lead to peace, and added some weaker remarks to the effect that in any event it could do no harm, even "failing full success."

The Imperial Chancellor now intervened. He had had a preliminary discussion with Hindenburg, and he agreed with him that a decision was not possible on this question while the military position was so uncertain. Also, he could not promise that a sudden declaration would not cause a breach between Denmark and the Central Powers: unrestricted U-boat war would be stamped from the start as "an act of desperation." He further proved his superiority in judgment over his naval colleagues by affirming that the expected result—the breaking of England—was merely an assumption, which nobody could prove. "We cannot lay an iron ring round England. Also our blockade can be broken by warships accompanying the transports." It seemed to him, therefore, that they could decide nothing "till the military situation had been cleared."

Holtzendorff replied—it sounds an impulsive reply: "I am convinced—I cannot adduce any proof—that a fort-

night's unrestricted U-boat war will have this effect, that the neutrals will keep aloof from England." In this matter the Norwegians were to teach him a lesson in psychology.

Capelle spoke of the powers of the large U-boats, whose number had been doubled. Helfferich argued that the only result would be extreme exertion and perfected organisation in England. Holtzendorff retorted: "We find ourselves in a tight position, to get out of which we must act. We need not threaten the neutrals, but we can invite them to behave towards us as they behaved towards England"—a line of thought adopted already, as we have seen, by Scheer and Tirpitz, but controverted by Jagow and unintelligible to any reasonable mind.

The Chancellor's warning that Denmark and other neutrals were unsteady, weighed heavily with Hindenburg and his Quartermaster-General. "South of the Carpathians," said Ludendorff, "the Rumanians are on the march. They are bad soldiers; but the Austrians are even worse. . . . The last man available from the east or west must be sent to Rumania. If Holland and Denmark declare war against us, we shall not be able to oppose them. . . ." Hindenburg, too, was of opinion that this risk must not be run till the military position had been settled. "A decision is not possible at present," he pronounced autocratically, "I shall make the time for it known." For the moment, then, Bethmann Hollweg had succeeded in directing the discussion. He was quite clear that no decision could be or ought to be taken until the military position had cleared and the other members of the Alliance had been consulted. When Austria was menaced with a danger which seemed likely to break her power of resistance, it was hardly reasonable to involve her in a war with new enemies. In a few weeks the Reichstag would meet; he proposed then to tell the political leaders that "the decision (with regard to submarine warfare) had been postponed; and that Field-Marshal von Hindenburg had stated that he must wait for the issue of the Rumanian campaign before he could form a definite opinion."

The outcome of the conference was, therefore, that the question was postponed. The Chancellor had shown that he was inclined to accept Helfferich's conclusions rather than Holtzendorff's upon the technical side of the problem; but he had been quite silent upon the general principle of submarine war. Only Jagow had used language which showed once more that the thinking power of Germany lay with her civilians rather than with her militarists. The neutrals, he said, could not be conciliated: they showed tremendous unrest during

the previous U-boat campaign, and naturally so. "The difference between our method and England's is, above all, to be found in the fact that we should be destroying ships and human life in order to exert pressure, whereas by the English method the neutrals are only restricted in the free exercise of their activity." This simple discovery is significant, as having been made by each nation in its own way. To the Dutch and Scandinavian traders it came as a practical matter of business; to the Latin mind it was laid bare by the clear, quick light of reason; to the Anglo-Saxon by the equally swift flash of humour. The German statesman reached it by the long and serious groping of a methodic mind; the German Admirals could never see it at all, even when it was pointed out to them.

## 4

The conference left Admiral von Holtzendorff's existing plan of submarine warfare untouched: he was still free to carry on a restricted campaign, and he carried it on with great energy and persistence. His submarine commanders did not pay any great attention to the promises made by the German Government, for ships were frequently torpedoed without warning; but the German naval leaders were quite right in assuming that the American President would find it difficult to champion "the sacred rights of humanity" unless American lives and property were destroyed. They were thus able to keep their submarine fleet fairly active; and the following table of British losses, after the *Sussex* crisis, gives an outline picture of their activities; and it must be added that the attack, in August, fell even more heavily on Allied shipping.

|                   | Losses in European<br>waters and the<br>Atlantic.<br>(Mined or torpedoed.) | Losses in the<br>Mediterranean.<br>(Mined or torpedoed.) |
|-------------------|--|--|
| June : : : : 5    |  | 10   |
| July : : : : 9    |  | 19   |
| August : : : : 11 |  | 12   |

It is noteworthy that the losses in Home Waters shows a steady increase; and this suggests a point which became very important later on. It had generally been supposed that the concessions made to America would make it impossible to carry on effective submarine warfare except in the Mediterranean. Holtzendorff had now proved that this

was not so, and that there was still a means of attacking British commerce at its points of concentration near home. His next step was to try to bring the new military chiefs to his own point of view, and on September 10, rather more than a week after the conference at Pless, Captain von Bülow visited General Ludendorff at Great Headquarters on behalf of the Naval Staff.<sup>1</sup>

He began the conversation by saying that the Naval Staff's information about neutrals contradicted the Chancellor's recent statement, and added that to renew the submarine war would give an impression of strength which would act as a deterrent to small neutrals contemplating a rupture with Germany. Ludendorff answered that he must accept the Chancellor's view on political questions, and that he had not enough men to hold the Danish and Dutch frontiers, but added significantly an expression of his regret that a question which was "purely military" should have been given a political treatment. When the interview ended, the naval representative gave the Quartermaster-General one of the memoranda which were then being prepared at naval headquarters by a group of bankers and scientists, and the conversation was reopened a few days later. Ludendorff then admitted outright that he was in favour of beginning unrestricted submarine warfare as soon as the military position on the continent was secure.<sup>2</sup>

Captain von Bülow drew up a record of his interview in duplicate, and sent one copy to General Ludendorff. To his own copy he added some notes, which were intended only for himself and Holtzendorff.<sup>3</sup> "General Ludendorff believes in a successful issue to submarine war . . . he has no faith in being able to force a favourable decision by means of war on land alone. On the authority of the Chancellor, he believes in the Danish danger. The Chancellor stands firm on this point, and he will continue to do so because he opposes submarine war and can terrify General Ludendorff with this Danish spectre and cause delay. . . .

<sup>1</sup> Ludendorff, *Urkunden des obersten Heeresleitung*, p. 302.

<sup>2</sup> Several years later, a bitter controversy raged round these memoranda. Several of the witnesses at the Untersuchungsausschuss accused the Naval Staff of collecting a number of men who had no authority to speak on economics, industry or trade, and getting them to prepare statistical arguments in favour of unrestricted submarine war (pp. 407-412). Erzberger makes the same charge (p. 214). There seems to have been a great deal of force in the accusation. Ballin, the greatest shipping magnate in Germany, was never asked for his opinion on submarine warfare during the war.

<sup>3</sup> *Beilagen zu den stenographischen Berichten des Untersuchungsausschusses*, Teil IV., p. 181.

" We must, therefore (*daher Zweckmässig*) :

" 1. With regard to General Ludendorff :

" (a) energetically represent the disadvantage of delay ;  
" (b) endeavour, by means of reports from our Attachés  
and so on, to weaken (the belief) in this  
Danish and Dutch danger.

" 2. With regard to the Chancellor :

" Strive to make him soften down his verdict about  
the Danish danger. I think that the Kalkmann  
memorandum might have effect upon the Chan-  
cellor and such people as Ballin : possibly it  
might work upon the former through the latter." <sup>1</sup>

The Chancellor did not wait to feel the effect of these subtle influences. Realising that the resolutions taken at Pless gave him only a limited time in which to thwart the movement in favour of unrestricted submarine war, he took the only step which was still open to him, and laid the real points at issue before the Emperor for decision.

His memorandum went straight to the point : the war might be ended by an unrestricted submarine campaign or by diplomacy. As the first method ought not to be resorted to until the second had failed, the Chancellor asked that Count Bernstorff might be allowed to reopen the question with the American President, and urge upon him the need of making an early move. Hoping, doubtless, that when the Emperor gave his decision upon the points now submitted to him, the naval leaders would co-operate in the policy adopted, the Chancellor was careful to say that the memorandum had been written with Holtzendorff's full concurrence.

The Emperor approved the Chancellor's proposals, and the necessary instructions were sent to Washington. Bethmann Hollweg was thus still in nominal charge of the Empire's policy. Had he been seconded by the officers of State from whom he looked for support, his efforts to open negotiations, backed by American diplomacy, might have been successful. But in spite of the appointment of Hindenburg to an overriding command, there was still no unity of purpose in the Government, and the heads of the departments of State and the commanders in the field continued to pursue their own objects, regardless of the general policy to which the Chancellor was committed.

Admiral Scheer was the first to set the example. At a

<sup>1</sup> Ludendorff, p. 305.

date between September 3 and November 22 which cannot be fixed exactly, he sent his Chief of Staff, Trotha, to Great Headquarters to see General Ludendorff.<sup>1</sup> If the outcome of this second interview between the naval and military leaders has been correctly reported, no conclusion is possible except one: that the military leaders and the naval command were determined to obstruct the Chancellor's diplomatic action by every means in their power. Several points were agreed upon: first, that there was no possibility of ending the war well (*zum guten Ende*) except by unrestricted submarine war; secondly, that "a half U-boat war" should in no circumstances be adopted; thirdly, that all special agreements with the northern Powers—Sweden, Norway and Denmark—should be cancelled as soon as possible, in order that there should be no "gaps" in the submarine operations; and, lastly, that there should be no "turning back."

Each one of these conclusions was a direct challenge to the Chancellor's negotiations: if only submarine warfare could end the war "well," it was obvious that diplomacy would end it badly; "a half U-boat warfare" was exactly what the Chancellor's concessions were obliging the navy to practise; and the only result of cancelling diplomatic agreements with foreign Powers, in order to give submarines a wider target, would be to reduce the Chancellor's department and the Foreign Office to sub-sections of the General Staff. These remarkable resolutions could not, of course, alter the policy which the Government had now adopted; but they throw a vivid light upon the fierce dissensions which were making co-ordinated action between its various departments impossible.

The Chancellor's instructions to Count Bernstorff were too late. When they arrived, there was no longer any hope that the American Government would approach the belligerents before the winter; for, after much hesitation, President Wilson had decided not to make any move until he had been re-elected. A brief retrospect of what had taken place during the summer in the American capital is necessary if the reasons for this postponement are to be understood. In July 1916, the President had ordered his Ambassador in London to return to Washington. The message did not explain why his presence was desired, but Sir Edward Grey grasped that it must be connected with the diplomatic intervention which Colonel House had offered earlier in the year. Since Sir Edward Grey had replied to the American proposals, several public utterances by the President had

<sup>1</sup> Scheer, p. 247.

made Sir Edward Grey extremely doubtful whether he intended to intervene on conditions as friendly to the Allies as those which he had offered in January, possibly, indeed, doubtful whether he had ever intended to assist us on the very points which we considered essential to a well-regulated peace treaty.<sup>1</sup>

On May 27, 1916, President Wilson had addressed the American League of Peace at its first annual meeting. He knew that he had to speak to an audience which expected him to mediate in Europe, but which did not realise that he had already attempted to do so and failed; and he knew that those foreign statesmen with whom he had attempted to negotiate at the beginning of the year would scrutinise his utterance critically. All this made him extremely cautious; but his speech, analysed by those who shared, or at least thought they shared, his most intimate thoughts, seemed to go beyond what mere caution demanded. In his opening sentences the President proclaimed that the United States was not concerned with the causes or origins of the war. "The obscure fountains," he said emphatically, "from which its stupendous flood has burst forth we are not interested to search for or explore." Was this a mere form of words deliberately chosen to disguise the offer of help which he had given to the Allies earlier in the year, or did the passage mean that the offer had lapsed and would not again be renewed on such favourable terms? Sir Edward Grey, at all events, thought the utterance was suspicious: he interviewed Mr. Page before his departure for Washington, and was much stiffer and more unyielding on the question of American mediation than he had been, earlier in the year, to Colonel House. In the first place, we knew the catch words "Freedom of the Seas" to be nothing but the outer wrapping to a policy which we had opposed for a long time past: that of endeavouring to make all naval supremacy useless. Secondly, Sir Edward Grey made it quite clear that the phrase in the President's speech about the obscure, untraceable origins of the war, seemed very unfair to us. In conclusion, he warned Mr. Page that we should never agree to mediation unless the French also consented: "Least of all could the English make or receive any suggestion, at least until her great new army had done its best." In other words, we were hopeful of final victory, and did not intend to be turned aside from our purpose so long as our confidence in being able to achieve it was unshaken.

This last remark must have shown the American Ambas-

<sup>1</sup> See Grey, *Twenty-five Years*, Vol. II., pp. 128-30.

sador how wide a gulf there was between the President's outlook and ours, and how easily the difference between us might grow into an open antagonism. We were hoping for a final, decisive victory, and were ready to make any effort within our strength to get it: the American Government were convinced that neither side would be able to force a military decision; and were basing their own hopes of mediating successfully on the assumption that all the Powers at war would very soon admit the deadlock. Obviously, then, Great Britain's resolute hopes were standing in the way of an early settlement. This, however, was not all: Sir Edward Grey's caveat about maritime warfare and naval power cut at the very roots of the American policy; for it was President Wilson's avowed wish to mediate between the warring Powers in such a way that they would be left to settle their territorial claims between themselves, whilst he presided over an International Congress to prevent future wars and to ensure that the "Freedom of the Seas" should be so enforced that navies could "only be used against each other, and no longer against commerce and for purposes of blockade."<sup>1</sup>

The President's detachment from what were for us the practical issues of the war worked directly against us. So long as the German armies held Belgian and French territories, it would be very difficult for us to get them back by mere diplomatic bargaining; practically impossible to oblige the enemy Powers to compensate our Allies for the damage they had done; and totally impossible to arrange for the return of Alsace-Lorraine to France. Yet these were, to us, the three absolutely essential conditions for peace; without them the balance of power in Europe would be so upset that a league to enforce peace would be impossible. It is quite true that the President had empowered Colonel House to inform the Allies that, in the last resort, the United States would be willing to enforce most of our peace conditions by armed intervention; and that, in consequence, we knew that the President had more concern and interest in the political frontiers of Europe than he pretended. There was, none the less, a general apprehension that he was half-hearted on these points, and that his only real concerns were a general disarmament and a league to enforce peace—measures which we could not consider until the territorial readjustment of Europe was complete. Even Sir Edward Grey, who had been most concerned with the secret negotiations at the beginning of the year, and was probably better informed of President Wilson's intentions than any other European states-

<sup>1</sup> Bernstorff, p. 249.

man, seems to have feared that the American peace plan could not be ours, simply because points which we thought essential the American President seemed to treat as secondary.

It was, perhaps, because the President realised this, that he was so distant and depressed when Mr. Page went to visit him.<sup>1</sup> And if this realisation was, in fact, weighing upon him, it must certainly have inclined him to postpone his mediation; for no American President could lightly view the prospect of entering a peace conference in which his principal antagonists would be the democratic Powers of western Europe. The reason he gave to Bernstorff involved a temporary abandonment of the theory of stalemate: it was that Rumania had entered the war, and that the state of military equilibrium on which he had based his hopes of an early peace had been broken.<sup>2</sup>

The reasons for the postponement are, however, less important than its consequences, for in two months the diplomatic advantages which Bethmann Hollweg and Bernstorff had so laboriously acquired were all lost.

American public opinion had undoubtedly for the moment turned against us; but the President saw, clearly enough, that the friendly and even cordial relations which had sprung up between the United States and Germany rested on a very insecure basis; and in his Address on being renominated to the Presidency, he used language which was little else than a warning to the German Government against presuming too much upon the new state of things.<sup>3</sup> "The rights of our own citizens became involved: that was inevitable. Where they did, this was our guiding principle; that property rights can be vindicated by claims for damages when the war is over, and no modern nation can decline to arbitrate such claims; but the fundamental rights of humanity cannot be so vindicated. The loss of life is irreparable. *Neither can direct violations of a nation's sovereignty await vindication in suits for damages. The nation that violates these essential rights must expect to be checked and called to account by direct challenge and resistance.*"<sup>4</sup>

Words like these would have warned Admiral von Holtzendorff of the folly of what he was proposing to do if he had been capable of thinking about anything but submarines and their radius of action. Intent upon his plan of reinstating unrestricted warfare, he had kept his U-boats busy during September; but they had not attacked commerce outside their usual

<sup>1</sup> Page, *Life and Letters*, p. 188.

<sup>2</sup> Bernstorff, p. 243.

<sup>3</sup> President Wilson was renominated by the democratic convention in September 1916, and re-elected on November 7, 1916.

<sup>4</sup> Scott, *President Wilson's Foreign Policy*, pp. 227-8.

areas. Nineteen British vessels had been sunk in the Mediterranean, eleven in the North Sea, and twelve in the Western approaches, in the Bay of Biscay and off the coast of Portugal. And, as in the previous month, the neutrals suffered still more heavily—Norway alone lost twenty-six vessels of 45,000 tons aggregate; while in the Arctic Ocean seven Norwegian ships and one Russian were sunk, as well as one British vessel. In October the zone of operations was much extended: six vessels were sunk in the White Sea; and on October 9 the citizens of the Eastern States of America received the sensational news that a German submarine was operating off Nantucket light-vessel. This boat was *U 53*; she had crossed the Atlantic under the command of Hans Rose, and he had been courteously received, on the day before the announcement in the Press, by the naval commandant at Newport. Then, after a brief exchange of visits, the submarine left her American harbour, and, having sunk five vessels off the outer light-vessel, returned home to Germany.

The exasperation caused by the visit spread like a prairie fire. Ever since the war began, the Americans had been exceptionally touchy about the exercise of belligerent rights within their waters. In 1914 our watching cruisers had shadowed certain steamers on their way to New York and Boston; the American Government had at once protested, notwithstanding that our action was admittedly legitimate. During the election campaign the same apprehensive and angry feeling about the integrity of American coastal waters again made itself evident; and our Admiral was warned that he had better relax his watch on New York and the Chesapeake until the agitation in the Press had died down. It can, therefore, be imagined what feelings were aroused when it was reported that *U 53* had actually carried submarine war to the American coasts, and was sinking vessels with the assistance of American navigational marks and under the eyes of American light-keepers. The proceeding was defended on the plea that the sinkings had been made outside territorial waters and according to the rules of cruiser warfare; but popular indignation is not easily subdued by quotations from books of maritime law. The agitation continued, and took a threatening shape. The President himself took note of it, and warned the German Ambassador that the incident must not be repeated.<sup>1</sup>

That such an act of folly and so tactless an insistence on bare legal right should have been perpetrated by a Government with a high reputation for unity and cohesion, was

<sup>1</sup> Bernstorff, p. 227.

surprising enough; and it was natural to ask how it could have been allowed. If Holtzendorff was so reckless as to wish for the experiment, was there no one in Germany with the sense and the power to forbid it? The answer is, no doubt, to be found in the rigid departmental divisions of the German Government. So long as the submarines carried out their operations according to the rules of cruiser warfare, as the Emperor had commanded them to do, the choice of the theatre for displaying their exploits was a "purely military" question. It is, therefore, very doubtful whether Admiral von Holtzendorff ever consulted the political heads of the Government about the cruise of the *U 53*; and she was probably sent out to give effect to the crude, illusory notion which Captain von Bülow had urged on General Ludendorff a month before: that the more harshly Germany acts at sea, the more will neutrals respect her.

This clumsy attempt to be impressive had, however, less permanent ill effects than might have been expected. Indignation was sharp, but short-lived. In a few days those sections of the American Press which had always advocated the German cause were expressing admiration for the exploit; and an event now occurred which diverted public attention to another matter.

On October 12, the British Ambassador presented a Note replying to the American protest about our treatment of mails. The contents of our Note were soon published throughout the American Press, and their reception was decidedly bad. A very large number of Americans believed, quite honestly, that we were using belligerent measures as a cover for seizing unfair advantages over American traders; and when it was seen that we did not mean to yield on the point, which was one of importance to us, feeling began to run high. The *New York World*, a paper which was supposed to be closely in touch with the Government, described our Note as evasive and impudent.

Fortunately for the Allies, we too were saved by a diversion. The fight for the Presidency was now in full blast, and Americans gave it their undivided attention. The two antagonists, Wilson and Hughes, were equally matched; each represented a powerful group of interests; and in the turmoil foreign relations were temporarily forgotten. President Wilson was returned to office on November 7; and when the American public turned back once more to the insistent questions of peace by mediation, and of British and German acts of war, several events of great importance took place in quick succession.

Just before the Presidential campaign began, Mr. Grew, the American Chargé d'Affaires in Berlin, had reported that the German Government intended shortly to seize a large number of Belgian workmen and carry them by force to Germany to work in the mines and factories.<sup>1</sup> The rest of the month passed in efforts to obtain further information, and, finally, Mr. Grew was handed a written memorandum stating that the German Government intended "to adopt compulsory measures against Belgian unemployed, who are a burden to charity, so that friction arising therefrom may be avoided." As the "charity" which was thus to be relieved of its burdens was the "Commission d'alimentation et de secours"—a purely American concern—the excuse was clumsy in the extreme. Mr. Grew answered at once that the German Government's action was a breach of International Law; and on November 29 he was instructed by his Government to hand in a strongly worded *note verbale*. A wave of resentment at the German deportation laws swept the United States. Count Bernstorff wired to his Government saying that opinion had "been poisoned" against Germany; and he stated that, but for this unhappy measure, President Wilson would have mediated between the nations at war as soon as he was re-elected.<sup>2</sup> The German Ambassador's views on such a subject are necessarily weighty. Count Bernstorff had much to explain to the German nation. He had to find a reason why President Wilson should have altered his views so completely in rather less than three months; and, looking back over the events of the autumn of 1916, it seemed to him that the Belgian deportations had caused the change. The explanation is not a sufficient one: it is not difficult to see that the President had other and graver reasons for mistrusting the German Government. The fact was that the submarine war was becoming more dangerous every day. Admiral von Holtzendorff was spreading his submarines over a wider and wider area, and they were showing an increasing disregard for the promises upon which American neutrality depended.

During the previous month, the steamship *Marina* of the Donaldson line had been torpedoed, without warning, off Cork.<sup>3</sup> A heavy sea was running at the time; and of fifty-one Americans on board, six were drowned. Investigation showed that the vessel was "on her owner's service, running on her ordinary berth, and entirely under the orders

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Government publication, *European War*, No. 4, pp. 357-9.

<sup>2</sup> Bernstorff, p. 258.

<sup>3</sup> *European War*, No. 4, p. 258, *et seq.*

of her owners." She would, on her return from America, have carried a number of horses for use in the British army. This would, admittedly, have made the Government the consignees of part of the cargo; but it could not properly be alleged, as the German Foreign Office did, that the *Marina* was a "horse transport ship in the service of the British Government." Nor was this all. Two days earlier, the *Rowanmore*, with American citizens on board, had been shelled off the Irish coast whilst lowering her boats; on the very day that the *Marina* was sunk, the American steamer *Lanao* was sunk off Cape Vincent, in spite of the fact that the cargo was innocent; and on November 8, the large British liner *Arabia* was sunk without warning in the Mediterranean. As had happened when the *Marina* was torpedoed, the German Government excused their action by stating that the *Arabia* was in British Government service. We had no difficulty in proving that the statement was false; and when he took stock of the position on returning to office, President Wilson must have been painfully conscious that the pledges which the German Government had given him in April were being deliberately violated.

But more than a month was needed to examine each case and to receive the German answers to the questions raised; so that it was not until the middle of December that all the facts were known. By then very important negotiations of another kind were in progress, and these cases, flagrant as they were, did not receive much attention. The American Government did not press their protests, and Count Bernstorff concluded, in consequence, that what had occurred was without importance; but this was a very hazardous assumption.<sup>1</sup> If the President, in the interests of his impending effort at mediation, decided to draw as little attention as he could to the incidents, it by no means followed that he was not deeply and painfully impressed by the unscrupulous policy which had caused them.

## 5

The steady spread of the submarine campaign and its increasing successes had now brought on a fresh internal struggle in the German Government; and the taking of American lives in violation of promises given was as much the outcome of confusion, uncertainty and diversity of aim as of deliberate bad faith.

<sup>1</sup> Bernstorff, p. 262.

On October 1, only a week after Bethmann Hollweg had presented his memorandum upon American mediation to the Emperor, he received a "very confidential" report from Holtzendorff.<sup>1</sup> It was to the effect that the Great General Staff had advised him to begin unrestricted submarine warfare on October 18, and to issue the necessary orders on the 10th. The news amazed him; and his reply went much further than a mere protest against a breach of procedure. After explaining the lamentable effects of withdrawing all diplomatic undertakings without warning or explanation, he attacked the principle of submarine war itself. It consisted in striving for results based on the merest guesswork, at the cost of a certain and definite evil. "The effect of submarine warfare upon England is purely speculative . . . it is impossible to impose an unbreakable blockade upon her." Apart from this, Great Britain would certainly not face the danger passively. If she introduced an effective convoy system, the whole basis upon which the Naval Staff had built up its arguments would be withdrawn. Doubtless intensified submarine war would injure Great Britain, but that was a very different thing from compelling her to make peace, when that same act of war would rally America, Holland, Denmark and Spain to her assistance. "The perspective which all this opens up is so wide, and of such general import, that, quite apart from American action, no final decision can possibly be come to until His Majesty has had the matter set before him in all its aspects."

This energetic protest was presented to the Field-Marshal by Baron von Grünau, the Chancellor's representative at Headquarters. His report shows how completely the military and civil departments of Government mistrusted one another. Hindenburg and Ludendorff wished him to tell the Chancellor how much they deplored the mistake. Nothing was further from their thoughts than to take separate action. "Both these gentlemen assured me, several times over, that no discord must be allowed to disturb their local co-operation with you." But having thus discharged his duty, Grünau continued that he had very good reason for thinking that "General Ludendorff is counting upon an early beginning to the line of action mentioned" [intensified submarine warfare].

Two days later, however (October 4), the General Staff realised that their manœuvre had been premature. On that day Holtzendorff, whose obstinate energy no consideration seems ever to have restrained, went to press his views upon

<sup>1</sup> *Beilagen*, Teil IV., pp. 183, 184.

the Emperor. He was told curtly "that there could be no question of re-starting intensified submarine warfare for the moment."<sup>1</sup>

This ended the attempt to force the Government's hand; but it only set on foot the Great General Staff's campaign against the Chancellor's authority. We may doubt whether Hindenburg and Ludendorff shared Holtzendorff's anxiety to re-start an autumn campaign of unrestricted submarine warfare; but it is absolutely certain that they had determined to constitute themselves the deciding authority on the whole question. What they desired and aimed at was that they might be in a position to settle the matter themselves, without these interminable discussions, in which the Chancellor's considerations of policy had the same weight as their own views on the military position. For this it was needful to set up a new fence round the Chancellor's field of authority. The first move in the new game was made by Hindenburg. His letter was written only a day after the Emperor had conveyed his decision to Admiral von Holtzendorff. It was not sent through Grünau, although it appears, from previous communications, that he was the official intermediary; it was addressed direct to Bethmann Hollweg, and ran thus: "At the meeting in Pless, at the end of August or the beginning of September—I cannot fix the date more closely—I recollect that Your Excellency said that the decision whether submarine warfare should be intensified rested with the High Military Command. Your Excellency only stipulated that you might consult the Allies and announce certain friendly settlements with other nations. Your Excellency has also emphasised the responsibility of the High Command on the submarine question to members of the Reichstag, although the actual expressions used have not been communicated to me. From numerous statements that have come into my possession, I am of the opinion (which is shared by wide political circles) that responsibility for the submarine war rests solely with the High Command. From the telegram quoted above, I conceive that Your Excellency's views on the question are not what I had supposed. I understand your point, but in order that we may be quite clear (*tatsächlich festzustellen*) how far responsibility for a sharpened submarine war rests with the High Command, I should be grateful for an expression of your opinion."

It is difficult, at first sight, to understand how Hindenburg found it possible to put the Chancellor's words in question. The discussion at Pless had been very carefully recorded by

<sup>1</sup> *Beilagen*, Teil IV., p. 185.

Grünau, and a copy of his minutes was doubtless available at Headquarters. They contain no syllable which suggests, even remotely, that the Chancellor resigned any part of his responsibility for deciding whether intensified submarine warfare should, or should not, be re-started. How then could the Field-Marshal risk the statement that he had done so? The answer is, no doubt, that the statement was merely a brief and convenient expression of what he regarded as the result of the debate. As for the risk of contradiction, he was not likely to make much of that. The minutes of the Pless conference, however accurate, could only be a summary of the proceedings, and not a verbatim report of them. It was, therefore, always open to any person present to maintain that more had actually been said than appeared on the documents.

The Chancellor answered sharply that he had never said anything of the kind attributed to him; but he was less firm on the challenge to state his opinion with regard to responsibility. If the Emperor ordered intensified submarine warfare, doubtless he did it by virtue of his authority as military Commander-in-Chief. This, however, did not dispose of the question. The decision itself could not be taken without first examining the foreign affairs of the Empire. "I hope, therefore, Your Excellency agrees with my opinion that, apart from the immediate participation of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, a measure of such importance as that of unrestricted submarine warfare ought not to be decided on without consultation with the Imperial Chancellor."

The strength of the answer lay in the reminder that only the Emperor could issue the necessary orders; but it is clear that the Chancellor felt his own position to be shaken. The Field-Marshal was openly interfering with the politics of the Empire and using the Reichstag parties for his own ends. Almost simultaneously with Hindenburg's letter, the Centre Party passed a resolution about the constitutional position of the Imperial Chancellor in war, and the connection between the two was patent.<sup>1</sup> On October 14, therefore, Bethmann Hollweg telegraphed to Washington, urging that the President should be asked to hasten his first peace move, as the demand for unrestricted submarine warfare was rising.<sup>2</sup>

Four days later, an Imperial Council met at Pless. A proclamation of Polish independence was agreed to; but beyond this we know practically nothing of what occurred.<sup>3</sup> If submarine warfare were discussed, evidently nothing was done to bind the Government to a consistent line of action;

<sup>1</sup> Bethmann Hollweg, pp. 127-8.

<sup>2</sup> Bernstorff, p. 254.

<sup>3</sup> Bethmann Hollweg, p. 95.

for after the meeting, as before it, Holtzendorff continued to press for wider powers, regardless of the diplomatic situation and of the Emperor's ruling. Whether the Chancellor could have held the military party in check much longer may be doubted. In any case, he shortly became party to a move which dominated everything on the international chess-board.

## 6

Ever since the summer, Baron Burian, the Foreign Minister of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, had been warning Berlin that Austria's war machinery was running down; and now, as the winter was coming on, bringing with it a terrible prospect of want and suffering, he renewed his representations and urged that every neutral State in Europe should be asked to make a joint move in favour of peace.<sup>1</sup> A plan of the kind had the advantage that it in no way obstructed President Wilson; but rather assisted him. On the other hand, joint action between Norway, Sweden, Holland, Switzerland and Spain would not be easily or quickly arranged; so that, if speed was what was wanted, it was doubtful if anything would be gained.

Bethmann Hollweg has never given his whole opinion on the plan of making an independent peace move. As far as one can judge from his very guarded answers when he appeared before the Reichstag Committee of Inquiry, years later, he was not averse to it, though he did not approve of the method finally adopted. He was absolutely certain that there was a peace party in the British Cabinet; and he thought, by some misreading of diplomatic events, that Great Britain had made a "peace feeler" during the year. He was entirely mistaken, but it was a misunderstanding which was quite widely shared; for the same assertion is to be found in Count Bernstorff's evidence before the Committee of Inquiry and in Hildebrand's *Life of Ballin*. The Chancellor had thus some reason to think that the Entente would not reject peace proposals outright, if made to them; and probably on this ground seconded Baron Burian's proposal. It seems strange, at first sight, that the High Military Command should have been in favour of making peace proposals, yet they undoubtedly were; and their motives, though complex and disingenuous, were not inconsistent. In the first place, they thought that a peace which put their victories on record might

<sup>1</sup> *German Official Documents relating to the World War* published by the Carnegie Endowment, p. 1053.

possibly be arranged. The German army had defended itself successfully on the Western Front, and overpowered our latest Ally, Rumania. If the German negotiators could come to the conference table with such good cards in their hands, it seemed inconceivable that they should not leave it with most of the tricks to their score. Behind this there was another and more powerful motive. They completely mistrusted American mediation. The assurances that the President would leave the belligerents to settle their claims against one another, and preside over an international congress for preventing war, had not persuaded them. To Hindenburg and Ludendorff, President Wilson seemed the man who, before all others, was likely to rob them of the fruit of their victories.

Thirdly, there was the alternative and much stronger hope that a breakdown of the negotiations would put the Entente Powers in the wrong and clear away the last remaining argument against unrestricted submarine war. To this hope the Emperor himself, as we shall see presently, was a party.

These were roughly the sources out of which the German peace proposals sprang; and by October 20 the matter was settled; for on that day the Emperor sent Bethmann Hollweg a highly sanctimonious letter, telling him to propose peace to the Entente Powers.

It now remained to settle what conditions of peace the negotiators should insist on. This was a very difficult matter. The terms desired by the Austrian and German Governments were compatible; but the demands of the German Generals were very heavy, and their attitude was extremely threatening.<sup>1</sup> Their conditions included a control of the Belgian railway and heavy indemnities both from Belgium and France; and, in order to show the Chancellor that they really intended to see these terms enforced, Hindenburg asked him, by letter, to state what minimum conditions he would insist on at the conference, even at the cost of continuing the war. In the end, agreement was only reached by leaving out all mention of the very large number of points in dispute and drawing up the rest in the vaguest possible language. Bethmann Hollweg stated, years later, that he always looked upon this list of conditions as a compromise between the conflicting views and ambitions of the parties in Germany, and that he never attached any great importance to them. This agrees with his answer to Hindenburg's challenge, which he met by saying that the best terms to be obtained at a future conference depended upon the progress of the negotia-

<sup>1</sup> *German official documents*, p. 1053, *et seq.*

tions, and nothing was to be gained by binding the Government to a particular set of clauses.

When finally settled, the compromise ran thus: Belgium was to be evacuated, and was, in return, to give certain undefined securities to Germany; France would be given back her invaded provinces, but was to pay an indemnity, in addition to which the Briey basin was to be annexed as a "frontier rectification." The greater part of Serbia was to be given as spoil to Bulgaria, and the nucleus which remained was to be bound by close economic ties to Austria-Hungary. Montenegro was to disappear, and be divided between the dual monarchy and an independent Albania. Rumania was apparently to be treated less harshly; for no demands against her are mentioned except frontier rectifications at the Iron Gates and in the Bistritza valley. Russia was to cede all provinces occupied by the German armies, which were either to be annexed or set up as independent States, bound closely to Germany; the limits of the autonomous Poland, which were to be set up, were not defined even approximately. The captured German colonies were to be returned, with the exception of Kiao-chao and the Japanese acquisitions in the Pacific. In order to compensate Germany for these losses, Belgium was to cede her the Congo. All capitulations in the Turkish Empire were to terminate, and Russia was to be given free passage through the Straits. Nothing was settled about the Russian conquests south of the Caucasus.

It was decided that these conditions should be rigidly kept secret, and that not a syllable of them should be divulged until a peace conference had actually been assembled.

November was almost out when the German Note had been examined and approved by Austria, Bulgaria and Turkey. Even then Bethmann Hollweg still kept it back, and waited for the moment when German victories should have seemed to reach their zenith. All through the month the Rumanian armies retreated before the Austro-Germans, and on December 6 Bucharest fell. Two days later Bethmann Hollweg received a letter from Field-Marshal von Hindenburg telling him that there was no longer any objection to issuing the Peace Note; always providing that the war was continued without respite by land and sea; that unrestricted submarine warfare was to be begun at the end of January; and that the political leaders could reckon on negotiating the kind of "peace that Germany needed." This was all fairly sweeping, but the condition about submarine warfare was positively staggering. The Chancellor was to negotiate a peace, with American and neutral co-operation, whilst the

navy and army commanders were preparing for the sinking of peaceful merchant ships in violation of the most solemn diplomatic engagements; and finally, at a moment when every effort had been ostensibly made to insinuate a conciliatory feeling into the affairs of nations, the Naval High Command was to be given a free hand to provoke universal exasperation and bitterness. The fact was that Hindenburg saw no reason to delay unrestricted submarine war now that he had enough troops to overrun Holland and Denmark if they protested against it. To him the United States was simply a country without an army; and the enormous assistance that she could give the Entente, without even landing a soldier in Europe, was outside the limits of his vision. He had made up his mind that the High Command was to decide the question, and his letter was a fresh reminder of their determination to take the matter out of the Chancellor's hands. Bethmann Hollweg understood it so, and answered more firmly than he had done before. "Unrestricted submarine war can only be started by withdrawing our undertakings to America, Holland, Denmark and Sweden. Whether such a withdrawal is possible in January 1917 can only be settled after reviewing the whole situation as it then stands; no final decision can be taken now. If, however, our peace proposal is rejected, our attitude on the question of armed merchant vessels will be presented with the greatest energy.

"I should have been grateful had the High Military Command presented their proposals to the Emperor after consultation with the political sections of the Government."

The implication of these words is clear: the military leaders were simply pressing their views on the Emperor when they could get him by himself, and were doing their utmost to supersede the old system of general discussions in which every section of the Government was represented.

The militarists had to wait until early in December before the politicians put forward "peace proposals." But when the time came they could not complain of the methods adopted. Bethmann Hollweg in his speech to the Reichstag, in which he announced the opening of negotiations, took the magnanimous, imperial, innocent and minatory tone which was as like his master as it was unlike himself. In the Note to the neutral intermediaries he dwelt on the indestructible strength of Germany and her Allies, and their unswerving "conviction that respect for the rights of other nations is not in any degree incompatible with their own rights and legitimate interests"; he added that "they feel sure that the propositions which

they would bring forward, and which would aim at assuring the existence, honour and free development of their peoples, would be such as to serve as a basis for the restoration of a lasting peace." In the Reichstag he repeated these points, and added two more, evidently for the sake of their effect at home. "In August 1914 our enemies challenged the superiority of power in a world war; to-day we raise the question of peace, which is a question of humanity. The answer which will be given by our enemies we await with that serenity of mind which is guaranteed to us by our external and internal strength, and by our clear conscience. If our enemies decline and wish to take upon themselves the world's heavy burden of all those terrors which will follow thereupon, then, even in the least and humblest homes, every German heart will burn in sacred wrath against our enemies, who are unwilling to stop human slaughter because they desire to continue their plans of conquest and annihilation. In a fateful hour we took a fateful decision. God will be our judge."

This voice of the "clear conscience" is not the voice of Bethmann Hollweg, certainly not the voice of that Bethmann Hollweg who in August 1914 spoke candidly of "the wrong that we have done in neutral Belgium." Nor could it be considered a tactful utterance, suited to its ostensible purpose. It invited the question whether it was in any way sincere, or only a move in the game. In England there were a few who asserted that it was a genuine offer, and that we were bound both by religion and by our hopeless military position to accept it. But here, as in every country of the Entente, the opposite view was held by the great majority. It was, of course, at that time a matter of opinion, or of instinct and the fighting spirit: it can now be examined as a matter of fact. We know now that the German generals had pronounced the military position hopeless and the national position desperate; the admirals had declared that Germany could only be saved by a ruthless U-boat campaign, which the politicians, on the other hand, maintained to mean "nothing but catastrophe." We know also that the naval and military chiefs had agreed to force on the U-boat campaign and in no circumstances to admit any yielding. Was Bethmann Hollweg sincere, though inconsistent? Was he trying—was he allowed to try—by a real offer of peace, to save Germany from the deadly dilemma which he had so clearly explained to the Kaiser and his less capable advisers?

To begin with the offer itself: we have already seen that neither note nor speech gave any real offer; what the proposals were to be was not stated, nor even hinted at. The

Entente by responding would accept the German claims as to the origin of the war and the indestructible strength of the Central Powers, and they would be exposed to the risks involved in refusing the terms when offered, however impossible they proved to be. We know, however, that Bethmann Hollweg did think the bait might take. He telegraphed, on December 19, to Hindenburg: "I do not consider it impossible that our adversaries may express their readiness to enter into peace negotiations with certain reservations." He goes on to ask "whether it is thinkable to make our consent to an armistice dependent on such conditions that the disadvantage should not be ours but our enemies'." It is extraordinary that such a bait should have seemed to him sufficiently attractive; on the contrary, there was the remarkable assertion that the Germans had never swerved from the conviction that the rights of other nations were not in any degree incompatible with their own rights and legitimate interests: to the friends of Belgium and Serbia surely not a convincing statement. The explanation is that Bethmann Hollweg was only considering possibilities: it was necessary for him to be ready to meet any answer, but the answer for which he had been commanded to scheme was, beyond doubt, a refusal, and his object, or the object of the All-Highest whom he obeyed, was the resumption of the U-boat war. This statement may appear to assume an astonishing inconsistency in the Kaiser and his Chancellor, but its truth is not to be questioned. In a telegram dated October 1, 1916, Bethmann Hollweg protested to Grünau against a decision reported to have been taken without an agreement with himself and the sanction of His Majesty, and set out the existing situation. "We have, as everybody knows, promised America to wage the U-boat war only in accordance with the Prize Regulations. By personal command of His Majesty, Count Bernstorff has been instructed to induce President Wilson to issue an appeal for peace. Provided that Wilson can be so induced, the probable rejection of the appeal by England and her Allies, while we accept it, is intended to afford us a basis upon which we can morally justify the withdrawal of our promise to America before all the world, and above all before the European neutrals, and thus influence their probable attitude in the future." He adds that "before the situation has been cleared in that respect," and His Majesty's commands received, no U-boat campaign can be announced.

In the face of this document, can it be doubted that the German peace offer, as well as the American one to be pro-

cured by Bernstorff, was deliberately planned as a preliminary to the ruthless U-boat campaign?

We have other evidence, and it all points in the same direction. On December 19 Mr. Gerard, the American Ambassador, arrived in Copenhagen and saw the Austrian Ambassador. Gerard foreshadowed a peace move from the American President, the Pope, and possibly the King of Spain. He then—and this must clearly have been in answer to a question or hint from the Austrian Ambassador—"laid stress on his apprehension at the possible resumption of the unrestricted submarine war. In his opinion even the unconditional rejection of the peace offer on the part of the Entente would not be sufficient ground for disregarding on principle the fundamental international laws as hitherto recognised." The United States, if provoked, would enter the war. At the moment when Mr. Gerard spoke, President Wilson's Note had already been received by the British Government. It was "in no way prompted by the recent overtures of the Central Powers"; indeed, it could not have been expressed better if it had been designed to show up their principal defect. The President "is not proposing peace: he is not even offering mediation": he is seeking "to call out from all the nations now at war . . . an avowal of their respective views as to the terms upon which the war might be concluded." Such an avowal could well be made by the Entente Powers: they had only to ask for restitution (including Alsace-Lorraine), reparation and guarantees. But Germany could not avow her aims, for either they were incompatible with these and proved her guilt, or they were not incompatible, and therefore admitted her guilt. This dilemma had been perceived by the Germans as soon as they received from the Papal Nuncio the first news of President Wilson's action. On December 18 Count Wedel, the Ambassador at Vienna, telegraphed to the Berlin Foreign Office: "Baron Burian agrees with Your Excellency, and considers it probable that we shall be compelled to reject. Our reply should, in his opinion, be so worded that our tactical position shall not become worse, and that the possibility shall not be precluded of continuing to spin the thread." It is quite clear that what Germany will be compelled to reject is the statement of any proposed terms, the only thing which the Pope or the President had suggested, and the conclusion is therefore unavoidable that such a statement of terms being impossible for Germany, her peace offer could not have been intended to bring peace—in other words, it was a tactical move, an offer made to clear the situation for the militarists. The action

of the naval and military chiefs irresistibly enforces this view.

Whilst the German Note was being drawn up and settled, Great Britain had passed through a political crisis. On December 4 Mr. Asquith's Government had fallen, and Mr. Lloyd George had formed a new Cabinet. The "War Committee" (formed on November 3, 1915) had held their last meeting on December 1, 1916; and the new "War Cabinet" met for the first time on December 9. It consisted of the new Premier, Lord Curzon, Lord Milner, Mr. Henderson and Mr. Bonar Law, and was given the powers of an executive council for prosecuting the war. It was by this body that Bethmann Hollweg's Peace Note was discussed.

Nobody could guess what concrete proposals lay behind the Note; but it was obvious that the German Government had no intention of agreeing to the terms which we still hoped to enforce. The War Cabinet was, indeed, so unanimous for rejecting the peace offer that no suggestion of any other procedure was even uttered. The only point upon which opinion was divided was the method of rejection. As it was thought that the Note was a mere manœuvre to influence neutrals, and to throw the responsibility for continuing the war upon the Entente Powers, the Foreign Office had been very busy in obtaining opinions from the neutral chancelleries during the week preceding the discussion in the War Cabinet. The inquiries showed that there was a very general feeling in neutral countries against rejecting the German offer outright. The Swedish Foreign Minister and Cardinal Gasparri of the Vatican were specially emphatic that Germany ought, at least, to be asked to state her terms. In the end it was decided that a common Allied Note should be drawn up and issued from Paris. It was thought best that France, who had suffered so terribly, should be, in some sort, the Allied spokesman. Nothing but rejection was possible; for since December 12, when Bethmann Hollweg had made his announcement in the Reichstag, Allied opinion had been expressing itself in a very decided fashion. On December 13 Monsieur Briand had been cheered loudly in the French Chamber when he denounced the German Peace Note as a subtle, cunning manœuvre to divide the Allies; two days later M. Pokrovsky, the Russian Foreign Minister, made a speech to the Duma announcing the Tsar's determination to fight on and remain faithful to his Allies; and apart from these

official declarations, public feeling was very decided. One has only to glance at the daily papers of that date to realise the torrent of indignation which would have overwhelmed any attempt to compromise and give the German offer a further hearing.

If Bethmann Hollweg had been sincere when he said that he had only agreed to issue a separate Peace Note because he distrusted President Wilson's procrastinating methods, he must have regretted his own impatience. It was exactly a week after he had made his speech in the Reichstag, and only three days after the British War Cabinet had seriously discussed the German Peace Offer, that the American proposals were handed in. For this trivial anticipation the Imperial Chancellor had sacrificed the active collaboration of the greatest neutral Power in the world, and had bitterly disappointed its President.<sup>1</sup> His regret at the bad manœuvring into which he had been forced by his master must have been the keener in that, at home, these same violent influences were passing out of his control. Some days after the German Peace Note had been sent out, and almost simultaneously with the American offer to mediate, the military authorities decided to force the Chancellor's hand finally, and re-start unrestricted submarine warfare regardless of every other consideration. What prompted their decision has never been ascertained. It may very possibly have been the shortage of food in Germany and even of rations at the front caused by our blockade, and the dread of the terrible winter which lay before them. But when afterwards cross-questioned by the Reichstag Committee, Ludendorff said that it was the French attack at Verdun on December 15 which decided him.<sup>2</sup> The statement does not stand examination. The documents now published show quite clearly that the High Command decided, early in December, to press for unrestricted submarine war regardless of peace notes and diplomatic negotiations. Now the second battle of Verdun, which Ludendorff alleges was the deciding factor, began on October 24, and ended on December 18. Its results were quite clear before December began; so that Ludendorff's explanation may be an explanation, but the dates by which he strove to support it are wrong. In order to cover himself he stated that the French attack at Verdun began on December 15, which was practically the date on which it ended.

The available documents throw no light upon the question; but, they do show that some exceptionally severe shock took effect upon General Headquarters in the first

<sup>1</sup> Bernstorff, p. 270.

<sup>2</sup> *German official documents*, p. 887.

part of December. During the previous month Hindenburg and Ludendorff had discussed conditions of peace in a way which showed a complete confidence in the army's power to enforce the harsh terms they desired to see imposed. In January the Field-Marshal stated that the military position could "hardly be worse than it is now."<sup>1</sup> The French victory at Verdun is no explanation for such a change of outlook. Doubtless it came as a painful blow to German Headquarters to see their troops hurled in confusion from the heights which they had gained at such awful cost in the earlier part of the year; but they must have known perfectly well that the French victory was local and without any large strategical significance. It does not explain the Field-Marshal's new attitude; and nobody can read through the mass of materials now published without getting a strong impression that some set of facts, probably the facts of our blockade and the rapidly growing destitution of the central nations, came before Ludendorff's notice in the early part of December with a force which impressed upon him the urgent conviction that he must lose no time.

On December 20, when the Imperial Chancellor was carefully watching the effects of his Peace Note upon neutral opinion and waiting for the next move in the diplomatic game, the Foreign Office representative at Pless, Lersner, transmitted a telegram from Ludendorff to Zimmermann and Bethmann Hollweg. The message was singularly brief, and stated simply that the Quartermaster-General considered that Mr. Lloyd George's speech in the House of Commons was equivalent to a rejection of the German proposals, and that "as a result of the impressions I have received on the Western Front, I am of opinion that submarine warfare should now be launched with the greatest vigour."<sup>2</sup> Zimmermann saw that the message was serious, and answered it at once. He begged Lersner to keep a "steady pulse and a cool head," and to inform Ludendorff that the whole question must stand over until a formal answer to the German peace proposals had been received. It was clear, however, that the civilian ministers were giving way; for, as a sop to the military leaders, a promise was given that the American Government was shortly to be told that armed merchantmen would be torpedoed at sight. The undertaking must have caused the utmost misgiving to Zimmermann and Bethmann Hollweg, for Count Bernstorff had already told his Government that such a measure would be almost fatal;

<sup>1</sup> *German official documents*, p. 1319.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1199, *et seq.*

and when he got the message, he repeated his warning. Lersner strove conscientiously to do his duty. He pointed out "the extraordinary responsibility which the Supreme Command was taking upon itself with regard to the Emperor, the people and the Army, by this precipitate insistence"; and made a last effort to show what war with America would mean. No compromise or concession satisfied the generals; they were determined now to give the Entente no time to reply to the Peace Note in either sense. On December 22 Holtzendorff had once more, in a detailed memorandum to Hindenburg, given urgent reasons for adopting the unrestricted U-boat campaign. Without this method, he said, England would not be effectively starved, and, "further, the psychological elements of fear and panic would be lacking." Hindenburg accordingly telegraphed next day to the Chancellor. "The diplomatic and military preparations for the unrestricted submarine war should be begun now, so that it may for certain set in at the end of January."

Bethmann Hollweg himself replied to this, pointing out once more that the position must first be made clear with regard to America. This could not be done until the Entente had given a formal reply to the German peace offer. "At present nobody can foresee what it will be. In all probability it will be negative, but might nevertheless leave a loophole. We must not close this. This would happen should we begin action . . . before the receipt of the reply. Thereby the political success we have achieved through our peace offer . . . would be seriously impaired. Even now, we meet with the assumption that we got up the whole peace action *mala fide* and merely as a way of working up to the unrestricted submarine war." A bad impression had also been produced by the German Press, which, like Ludendorff, had replied to Lloyd George's speech and Wilson's Note with an immediate "cry for the submarines."

On December 26, after Ludendorff had revived the old falsehood about the decision come to on August 31, Hindenburg sent Bethmann Hollweg his ultimatum. It was simply to let the Chancellor know that he intended to get his own way. Bethmann Hollweg probably saw that the end had come; but as the necessary orders could only be sent out by the Emperor, the final step could not be taken until a conference had been assembled. He therefore promised to go to Pless in a few days.

In the meantime, he had received two urgent communications. One was a memorandum from Falkenhayn, which

throws a glaring light on the untrustworthiness of the German peace terms as drawn up, but not even yet divulged. England, it is argued, is as much bound as Germany to carry on the war to the bitter end: the fear that she will be "driven to extremes" lacks all substance. "Just as for us the war must be declared lost if the entry of Belgium into our 'concern' is not enforced, England loses it if she has to allow such a transfer." This point is made doubly plain. "No doubt can exist that the country must remain at our disposal as a strategical area for protection of the most important German industrial district and as Hinterland for our position on the Flanders coast, which is indispensable to our maritime importance." The Kaiser was of the same opinion, but for a different and very characteristic reason. On January 2 he declared to Grünau that "after rejecting our efforts for the third time, King Albert could not be allowed to return to Belgium; the coast of Flanders must become ours." The other correspondent was Admiral von Holtzendorff, who at Hindenburg's request had circulated a written statement of his views, to which he attached a memorandum showing the facts upon which they were based. It may be said that this document was drawn up by persons not competent to judge of the matter; but it was in form a closely reasoned statement, based on an enormous array of statistics. Bethmann Hollweg, it would seem, had not read it before, and the time at his disposal was too short to allow him to have it thoroughly examined by experts. He did what he could to get an independent opinion, by passing it on to Helfferich; but it was not until January 9 that the Minister of the Interior gave his views. They were a repetition of what he had said at Pless in August: Admiral von Holtzendorff's forecast about bringing Great Britain to her knees by destroying four million tons of shipping in five months was pure speculation, and any method of calculation which left American resources out of the reckoning was radically unsound.

Between December 26, when the Chancellor promised to come to Pless, and the date of the final decision, the German Government received a formal notification that the Entente Powers had rejected their Peace Note. The Austrian Government now made a desperate effort to keep the negotiations alive, and on January 2 the Emperor Karl sent a personal appeal to his Ally. The reply to it was not encouraging; but the Austrian Government persevered; and, four days later, Count Czernin had a conference with Prince Hohenlohe, Bethmann Hollweg, Zimmermann and the Under-

Secretary of State, von Stumm.<sup>1</sup> He probably saw that it was useless to press for fresh negotiations, and so, beyond recording his opinion that the war must end in a compromise, he confined himself to the matter immediately in debate, which was simply how the Entente's last Note could best be answered. It was agreed that a reply should be sent to the United States and to all the neutral Powers of Europe, and a draft was accordingly drawn up. There the matter rested; and three days later, on January 8, the Chancellor travelled to Pless for the final discussion on the future conduct of the war. Just before he arrived, the military leaders and Admiral von Holtzendorff met for a preliminary conference. Determined as they had always been to have their own way, they seem to have been appalled at what they now intended to do. The notes of the meeting, rough and laconic as they are, read like the records of a conspiracy. Those present had made up their minds; but they were deeply moved. Holtzendorff read out the orders to the submarine fleet and the notification to the American Government, and went on to say that the Emperor had "no real conception of the position." The meeting then came to the real point: would the Chancellor agree? The minutes of proceedings show best how the discussion proceeded:<sup>2</sup>

*Holtzendorff*: The Chancellor arrives here to-morrow.

*Hindenburg*: What are his troubles?

*Holtzendorff*: The Chancellor wishes to keep in his own hands the diplomatic preparation of the unrestricted U-boat war in order to keep the United States out of it. The Chancellor had characterised the Note with regard to armed steamships as a U-boat trap which would bring on the conflict with the United States.

*Ludendorff*: But the Chancellor knew all that.

*Holtzendorff*: The Foreign Office thinks that if the United States came in, South America would come into the war too. And, besides this, they are thinking about the times which will follow the conclusion of peace.

*Hindenburg*: We must conquer first.

*Ludendorff*: To characterise the Note concerning firing on armed steamers as a U-boat trap is just another attempt to put the matter off.

*Holtzendorff*: What shall we do if the Chancellor does not join us?

*Hindenburg*: That is just what I am racking my brain about.

<sup>1</sup> Baron Burian resigned his post as Minister for Foreign Affairs on December 22, 1916, and Count Czernin was appointed in his stead.

<sup>2</sup> German official documents, p. 1317.

*Holtzendorff*: Then you must become Chancellor.

*Hindenburg*: No, I cannot do that and I will not do it; I cannot deal with the Reichstag.

*Holtzendorff*: In my opinion, Bülow and Tirpitz are out of the question on account of their relations with the Emperor.

*Ludendorff*: I would not try to persuade Hindenburg.

*Hindenburg*: I cannot talk in the Reichstag. I refuse. What about Dallwitz?

*Ludendorff*: You mean whether he wants the U-boat war at all?

*Holtzendorff*: The Chancellor has the confidence of foreign nations to a great extent.

*Hindenburg*: Well, we shall hold together, anyway. It simply must be. We are counting on the possibility of war with the United States, and have made all preparations to meet it. Things cannot be worse than they are now. The war must be brought to an end by the use of all means as soon as possible.

*Holtzendorff*: Again, His Majesty has no real conception of the situation or of the feeling among his own people.

*Ludendorff*: That is true.

*Holtzendorff*: People and the army are crying for the unrestricted U-boat war.

*Ludendorff*: That is true.

*Holtzendorff*: Secretary of State Helfferich said to me: "Your method leads to ruin." I answered him: "You are letting us run headlong into ruin."

Early next day the Chancellor arrived. What happened is best told in his own words.<sup>1</sup> "With all these thoughts in my mind, I came to the general conference. It was held in the Emperor's presence on the evening of the 9th, and the atmosphere was just as charged as it had been during the forenoon when I discussed the matter, by myself, with the High Command. I felt that I was dealing with men who no longer intended to discuss the decisions they had made. . . . I certainly thought the help which America could give to our enemies was higher than the High Command imagined it to be; but after the Entente's answer to our Peace Note, I could not suggest fresh negotiations . . . I thought of resigning; but that would have altered nothing. The Supreme Command were now my political and personal opponents . . . and within his heart the Emperor was on their side. Had I opposed the decision, the crisis of July 1917 would have occurred six months earlier. A submarine-

<sup>1</sup> Bethmann Hollweg, Vol. II., p. 137.

war-chancellor would have been found all the earlier, in that he would have taken office at the desire of the great majority of the nation, of its representatives, of the army and the navy. I had no thought of saving myself; my only duty was not to obstruct a decision which could not be avoided; it was just because I feared to do so by resigning on January 9, that I remained in office." These words sound like the man himself, and they agree with what the reporter to the conference noted down:

"Chancellor: The prospects for unrestricted submarine warfare are, doubtless, very favourable . . . but it must be admitted that they cannot be demonstrated by proof. . . . Submarine warfare is the last card. We are making a very serious decision; but if the military authorities consider it essential, I am not in a position to contradict them." In this manner the last step was taken. Fatal as the decision was, it had been inevitable from the very beginning of the long debate. This is made clear by every document now available. By December 26 the last hope of common sense had disappeared. Hindenburg had changed his tactics: he no longer asserted that the Chancellor agreed with him, he simply accepted his disagreement and telegraphed his intention of disregarding it. "I must state that although Your Excellency in your capacity as Imperial Chancellor certainly claims the exclusive responsibility, in full consciousness of my responsibility for a victorious issue of the war, I shall naturally use all my endeavour to see that all I consider proper will be done from the military side." He followed this on December 31 with a rebuke on the subject of the peace terms. "Your Excellency's statement on the 29th that it might not be possible for us to retain the mining districts of Briey has filled me with doubt as to Your Excellency's fundamental standpoint." This latter and the reasonable reply which it drew from the Chancellor confirm the view that Bethmann Hollweg stood contrasted with the *imperators* real or titular as the one mind whose lines of thought were such as to be intelligible to those of non-Germanic birth and education.

But he, a mere civilian, could not face army, navy and Kaiser acting in concert. Admiral Scheer was now moving: in great anxiety lest the same concession as before should be made to America, he was sending a representative—Captain von Leventzow—to Berlin to convey an urgent warning against "such a middle course." This emissary saw Bethmann Hollweg on January 8, and the same date stands at the head of a telegram to the Chancellor from Hindenburg at

Pless. "I have the honour to inform Your Excellency that, according to the military situation, the intensified submarine war can, and therefore should, begin on February 1." Next day Holtzendorff, Admiral Scheer tells us, convinced His Majesty also. This formality covered the actual decision which had been made by Hindenburg: the procedure was completed by a telegraphic order "sent by the All-Highest to the Chief of the Naval Staff"—who either had or had not just left his presence. "I command that the unrestricted U-boat campaign shall begin on February 1, in full force . . . the fundamental plans of operation are to be submitted to me."

It is more than probable that the Kaiser's histrionic powers enabled him to believe in this command as the issue of his own will; and there can be no doubt that it was in no way discordant with his own wishes. But the method of staging is illuminated by the following telegram sent by Lersner, the Secretary at Pless (Headquarters), and marked as "only for the Imperial Chancellor and the Secretary of State!"

"His Majesty has received a large number of telegrams of assent and devotion in reply to his proclamation, to the German people. In strict confidence, I hear that Field-Marshal von Hindenburg and General Ludendorff are responsible for a great number of these, in order to show the world how unanimous all Germany is in its loyalty to the Emperor. His Majesty has expressed himself highly pleased at these marks of homage. Their widest publication in the Press would, in my humble opinion, cause His Majesty much pleasure."

On the very day when the decision was taken at Pless, the British Government replied to the American Peace Note.

President Wilson had not offered his mediation in the way that Colonel House had foreshadowed at the beginning of the year; indeed, he had not offered mediation at all, but had simply suggested that both parties at war should let him know what terms of peace they would be ready to accept, and left it to be understood that he would see whether the conditions of each side could not, after all, be reconciled.<sup>1</sup>

The War Cabinet were evidently quite convinced that President Wilson's real intentions had completely changed since Colonel House's visit in January. The President had then offered his assistance on conditions; in December the

<sup>1</sup> *Note Communicated by the United States Ambassador, December 20, 1916.*  
[Cd. 8431.] *Miscellaneous.* No. 39 (1916).

British Cabinet's chief anxiety was to decide whether, if the Allied Powers declined the invitation and said that the time to publish their peace terms had not arrived, the President would then undertake to coerce us, and, if so, what measures would he take? It was a very serious question. The Federal Reserve Board had recently stepped in and stopped the raising of a further Allied Loan, and the President had been given powers to retaliate against those blockade measures which had caused most irritation. By virtue of a resolution passed by Congress early in the year, he could refuse clearance to Allied vessels in American ports as a reprisal against our "Black List" measures. Similar measures with regard to munitions and materials for our munition factories would leave us in a very serious position. So far as we could tell, the American public would support the President if he decided to compel us to come to terms with the Central Powers. The danger was, if anything, greater than we knew. For whilst the British Government were discussing the Note, Mr. Gerard, the American Ambassador at Berlin, was assuring Baron Burian, in an official interview, that the United States Government were quite prepared to "force the peace" by preventing the Entente Powers from obtaining munitions and food, if their terms of peace obstructed the President's negotiations.<sup>1</sup>

Lord Robert Cecil laid his views before the Government in a written memorandum. As Minister of Blockade he had exceptional facilities for gauging neutral opinion. He advised complying with the American Note and giving the President no excuse at all for applying compulsion. Whether he would take the drastic steps which Congress had authorised was doubtful; but, if he was disappointed in our reply, he might quite well combine with other neutrals in questioning the legality of our blockade. "Very little encouragement from America would make the Governments of Sweden and Holland impossible to deal with. When an atmosphere of irritation had been caused by measures of this description, the President would feel himself strong enough to proceed to much more drastic measures." Lord Robert Cecil's views prevailed; but the details of our answer still remained to be settled. How should our war aims be defined? To draw up a list of the conditions of peace which each of the Entente Powers desired was obviously undesirable, and it would require very skilful draughtsmanship to state them definitely enough to meet the President's request, and, at the same time, to avoid any controversial details which might possibly excite disagreement.

<sup>1</sup> German official documents, p. 1084.

ment between the Allies. This very difficult task was undertaken by Monsieur Briand, the French Premier, Mr. Balfour, the British Foreign Minister under the new Government, and by Monsieur Berthelot, a high permanent official at the Quai d'Orsay. It was not until January 10 that the answer was delivered.<sup>1</sup> After expressing gratitude for the President's good offices, the Allied Governments objected, with some energy, to the sentences in the American Note which stated that "the objects which the Statesmen of the belligerents on both sides have in mind in this war are virtually the same," and then stated their terms. Belgium, Serbia and Montenegro were to be returned; France was to receive back her invaded districts; and "provinces formerly won from the Allies by force, against the wishes of the inhabitants," were to be restored; Italians, Czechs, Rumanians, and Slavs under foreign domination were to be freed from it; and the "bloody tyranny" of the Turks expelled from Europe. In order to make our standpoint perfectly clear, our official answer was supplemented by a special note from Mr. Balfour to the American President. With striking lucidity and power the British Foreign Minister explained the real difference between the American attitude and ours. To us the territorial rearrangements foreshadowed in our Note were the essential basis of peace, and President Wilson's scheme of general pacification must come after they had been imposed on the Central Powers. The weakness of both Notes was that nothing in the actual military situation suggested that the Entente would be able to enforce such terms within a calculable time. The position in Russia was getting steadily worse. Transport was breaking down, large masses of the army were starving, and provisions in the capital were becoming as scarce as though the town were besieged. Similar signs of weakness were showing themselves in Italy. If, with the Alliance at its full strength, we had failed to protect France, Belgium, Serbia, Montenegro and Rumania from invasion, it was hardly likely that we should succeed in extending their frontiers when our military strength was declining. If it was hoped that our answer would impress America with our confidence in the justice of our cause and our determination to fight the war to a victorious finish, the Note failed. Colonel House told Count Bernstorff that President Wilson

<sup>1</sup> *Reply of the Allied Governments to the Note communicated by the United States Ambassador on December 20, 1916.* [Cd. 8486.] Miscellaneous. No. 5 (1917), and *Despatch to His Majesty's Ambassador at Washington respecting the Allied Note of January 10, 1917.* [Cd. 8439.] Miscellaneous. No. 3 (1917).

called it "a piece of bluff" which he did not take seriously.<sup>1</sup>

It had been decided, at Pless, that unrestricted submarine war was to begin on February 1; there were thus three weeks left to clear the board for the last phase of the game. On January 16 Count Bernstorff received his instructions. He was to keep silent about what the German Government intended to do until January 31, and then announce that unrestricted submarine warfare was to begin on the following day. The German Ambassador knew that the President did not think that the Entente's Note debarred him from continuing his attempt at mediation; he therefore strove to mitigate what he could no longer prevent, and urged that neutral vessels should be given a month to get out of the danger zone without fear of being attacked.<sup>2</sup> He proposed also that the submarine campaign should be postponed until the President's negotiations had gone a little further. Both his suggestions were rejected without discussion.

During the whole month President Wilson strove untiringly to clear away the obstacles which still obstructed his mediation. As the Entente had announced their peace conditions, and the German Government had kept theirs secret, he endeavoured to clear the matter up, and pressed for the German terms to be communicated. The authorities at Berlin were very reluctant to comply with this request, for they feared that by doing so they would give him an opportunity of acting as a sort of arbitrator between the belligerents. Realising, however, that this was rather a fine point, as they reckoned to be at war with America in a few weeks, the terms were eventually sent to Count Bernstorff, with instructions to communicate them to the President confidentially.<sup>3</sup> The concession had no effect, for the telegram was only sent to Washington two days before the German Ambassador announced that the new submarine campaign was going to begin at once.

On January 22 President Wilson addressed the Senate about his peace negotiations.<sup>4</sup> He still hoped that they could be continued, and spoke in his vague, guarded way about guarantees for future peace, whilst, at the same time, disclaiming any wish to intervene directly between the Powers at war. Certain passages were much discussed in Germany at a later time, but the points in debate seem of no importance at all in view of what actually happened a week

<sup>1</sup> Bernstorff, p. 319.

<sup>2</sup> *German official documents*, pp. 1108, *et seq.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1048.

<sup>4</sup> Scott, *President Wilson's Foreign Policy*, p. 250.

later. At five o'clock in the afternoon of January 31 Count Bernstorff carried out his orders. The announcement was received so quietly by Mr. Lansing, the Secretary of State, that it is almost certain he had guessed what was coming. On February 3 President Wilson told Congress that he had severed diplomatic relations with Germany, and on the evening of the same day, Count Bernstorff received his passports.<sup>1</sup> The American President was at the time uncertain whether public opinion required more of him than this; he still hoped to get out of declaring war by proclaiming an "armed neutrality which we shall know how to maintain, and for which there is abundant precedent."<sup>2</sup> On April 3, when he saw from the progress of the submarine campaign that what he proposed was quite inadequate, he asked Congress to declare war.

<sup>1</sup> Bernstorff, p. 324.

<sup>2</sup> Scott, *President Wilson's Foreign Policy*, p. 260, *et seq.*

## CHAPTER VIII

THE MEDITERRANEAN. JANUARY TO AUGUST 1917

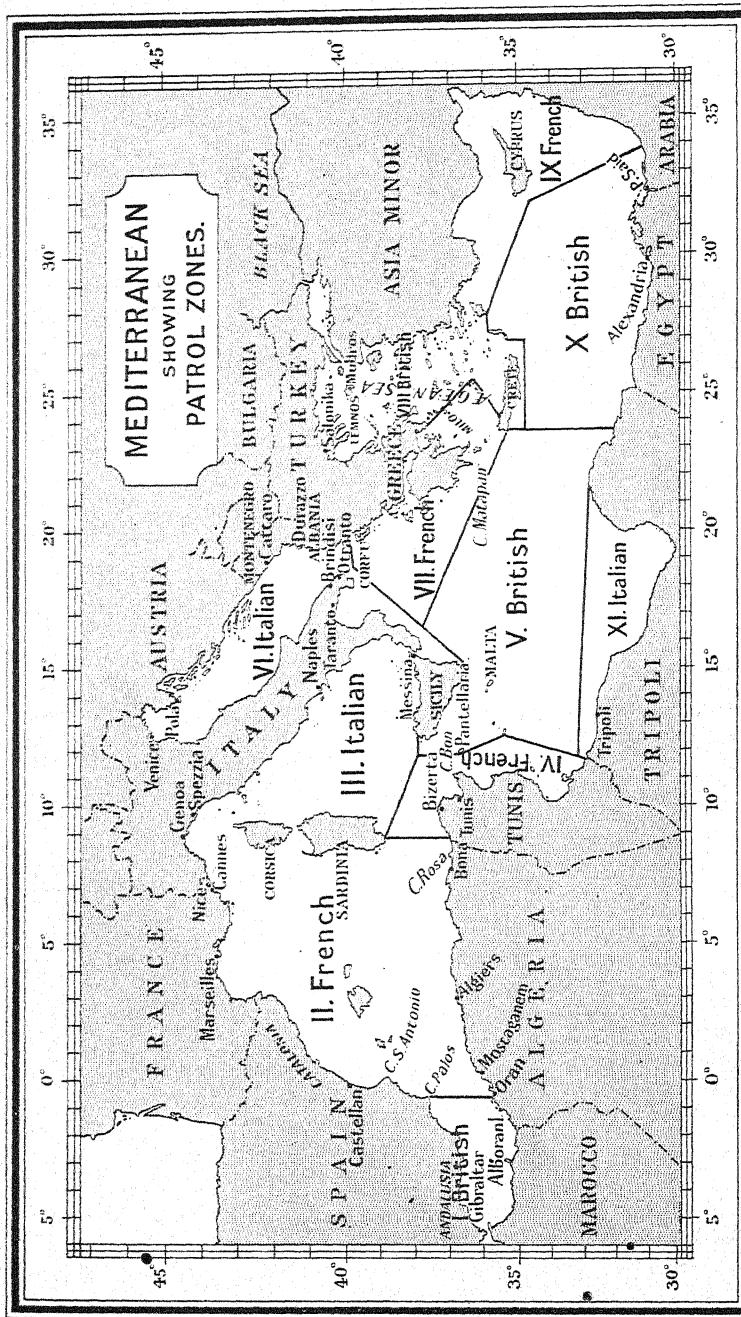
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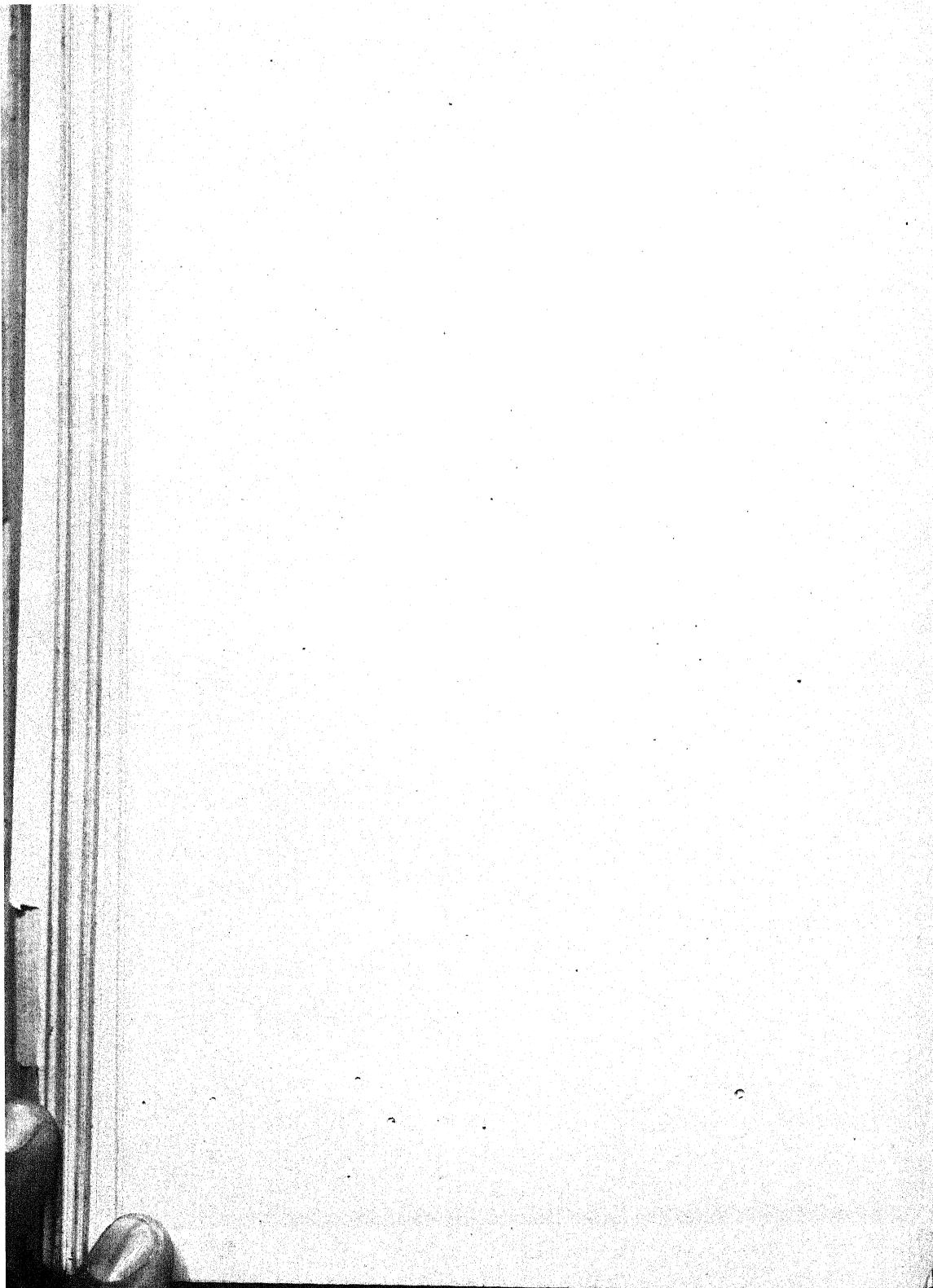
#### *Submarine Warfare, January to May 1917*

THE difficulties and disadvantages which beset a mixed command at sea have been repeatedly exemplified in Naval History : it was not likely that they could be altogether eliminated from our campaign against the German submarines in the Mediterranean. Three Allies were necessarily involved, and by the system adopted the whole sea was divided between them in zones of control, co-ordinated but independent. Around the coasts of Algeria and Tunis was a French zone, and the patrol of the areas west and south of Greece was also under French orders ; for the protection of the routes between Malta and Egypt and in the whole of the Ægean Great Britain was in command ; in the waters east, west and south of Italy the Italians were responsible.

The hazards involved in this arrangement were not overlooked. Even in Home Waters the division of the coast patrol into separate commands had already in some cases led to difficulties ; in the Mediterranean the differences of nationality, language and outlook would all interfere with a perfect co-operation, but the protection of each part of the coastal lines of traffic could not be easily managed otherwise than by the nation to whom that portion of the coast belonged, and gaps in such protection should occur, if at all, only at the frontier between one country and another. For the wide stretches of sea which vessels on ocean voyages must cross—such, for instance, as those between Messina and Egypt or between Marseilles and Salonica—protection could be afforded only by patrolling a fixed route or attaching a direct escort, provided by the countries through whose zones the vessel passed. Here another difficulty must be faced. The number of patrol craft capable of accompanying merchant vessels on long ocean voyages was manifestly too small to provide an escort for every steamer, and all that

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SHOWING  
PATROL ZONES.





could be done would be to make such use of them as seemed from time to time most advantageous.

In the result, vessels of the highest importance, such as troop transports and ammunition ships, were directly escorted by destroyers for their whole voyage when arrangements could be made; but occasionally, when such vessels crossed from one zone to another, the arrangements broke down. In February an Italian troop transport, the *Minas*, proceeding from Italy for Salonica, was lost as the result of an international misunderstanding. She was escorted by an Italian destroyer as far as the limit of the British zone; there, in the expectation that the transport would be met by British destroyers sent out from Malta, her escort turned back. But Admiral Ballard at Malta had not been given to understand that she would need British escort; he sent none, and the transport went on alone, to be torpedoed and sunk by a submarine, with the loss of 870 lives.

This disastrous failure in co-operation brought to a head the feeling that the arrangements for escort and patrol throughout the Mediterranean should be centralised under one command. This could only be done by consent of the three Powers concerned, and steps were taken to secure an international conference of the naval authorities in the Mediterranean which should discuss this and the other related questions of routes and anti-submarine measures. To fix the time and place for a meeting of men so strenuously occupied as the Allied Admirals was naturally a long affair; but ultimately it was arranged that the conference should take place at Corfu at the end of April.

Meanwhile, the sinkings of Allied shipping in the Mediterranean continued to be heavy. In February fifty ships, amounting to a total of 101,000 tons, were lost. In March the destruction was a little less—thirty-six ships of 72,000 tons; but among them was the French battleship *Danton*, sunk by *U 64*, under Commander Morath. The *Danton* was zigzagging and was under escort of one destroyer; nevertheless, the submarine was able to put two torpedoes into her, and the great battleship sank in three-quarters of an hour. The escorting destroyer caught sight of *U 64*'s periscope, gave chase and dropped depth charges; but the submarine dived deeply and escaped unhurt. For the remainder of her fortnight's cruise *U 64* passed to the western basin of the Mediterranean, where, close to the shores of Sicily, she sank two defensively armed British merchantmen and three Italian sailing vessels before returning to Cattaro.

Apart from the question of zones, the actual method of traffic protection in force in the Mediterranean—a fixed patrolled route between the major ports—had early in the year been discredited by the Admiralty, and they had approached the French Ministry of Marine with a view to substituting for it the principle of dispersal where wide stretches of open sea must unavoidably be crossed. By the scheme now proposed each vessel would have a track of its own, which would not be patrolled, and the patrols would be concentrated in those narrow waters where focal points could not be avoided. While the matter was still under consideration by the French, the Admiralty decided to make trial of the scheme by putting it into force with British ships in the eastern basin of the Mediterranean. From January 15 onward our ships did not follow the fixed patrolled routes between Egypt and Salonica or Malta, but sailed independently each on a track prescribed for it by the British naval authorities. The fixed route was still patrolled by British forces, though it was used only by non-British vessels. Dispersal on unpatrolled routes was not followed by large losses; in fact, in the first six weeks of its adoption only four British vessels were lost in the Mediterranean east of Malta, all of them torpedoed without warning, a fate from which the presence of the patrols would probably have been unable to save them.

In the latter half of February and the first few days of March losses had been particularly heavy on the route along the coast of Algeria, which was patrolled by French small craft; in fact, it was only on that route that any steamships were lost in the western basin. The principle at that time was for vessels, not defensively armed, to navigate close to the shore; and, if a submarine was known to be on the route, they were to be under way at night only, anchoring in some port of refuge from dawn till dusk. The rule was certainly effective in saving unarmed ships, but between February 20 and March 3 seven defensively armed vessels were torpedoed without warning while under way in the day-time. The six successful encounters between submarines and armed merchant vessels which took place on the same route during that interval were also fought in daylight.

The Admiralty now decided to abandon the Algerian coast route and to try the system of routes dispersed over the whole Mediterranean. From March 7 onward British merchant vessels leaving Gibraltar for Malta Channel hugged the Spanish coast in daylight as far as Cape San Antonio, whence, making their offing at dusk, they proceeded on

varying courses prescribed for them by the naval authorities at Gibraltar. The same principle was enforced by the Senior Naval Officer, Malta, on west-bound traffic. Each ship had its own track, and each track was a large zigzag, so arranged that the ship was never less than thirty miles from the African coast till south of Sardinia. The object of giving each ship a different zigzag track was that if one were met by a submarine the enemy would have to wait a long time before another vessel came up to him. Formerly, when all ships followed the same track, a submarine had often several vessels in sight, and the finding of one endangered all on the route. The new method, although it applied to British armed vessels only, seemed to be proving effective, and no more of them were sunk in the western basin during March. That there were still submarines on the Algerian coast route was proved by the loss of a tug, three encounters between French patrol vessels and submarines, and a duel in which a French armed merchantman drove her assailant off.

On the dispersed routes east of Malta three British vessels were sunk in March, all torpedoed without warning, and there were other losses in the focal area off Alexandria, which after a peaceful interval of sixty-eight days was once more raided by the enemy. The submarine was *U 63*. From Cattaro she seems to have gone directly south to communicate with the disaffected tribes on the west border of Egypt, and she was sighted off Alexandria first on March 24. In the course of the following week she torpedoed without warning two British ships within fifteen miles of Alexandria, and destroyed an Egyptian sailing vessel by gunfire. The second of the two British ships was a collier on passage from Alexandria for Port Said, and was under escort of four auxiliary patrol vessels. Neither she nor they saw anything of the submarine. The other patrol vessels based on Alexandria were engaged in guarding the French fixed route between Alexandria and the east point of Crete.

Whatever effort the German submarine service had made in February and March, it was intensified in April, when every boat that could be got to sea went out to the attack. At least twenty-four separate cruises can be traced in the Mediterranean, amounting altogether to twice as many hours as in March. Whereas in Home Waters the number of steamers destroyed in April was practically the same as in March,<sup>1</sup> in the Mediterranean it was increased threefold,

<sup>1</sup> One hundred and fifteen in March, 119 in April.

and the tonnage sunk in that sea represented a quarter of the losses for the month throughout the whole world.

Two cruises are worth examining in some detail. Lieut.-Commander Walter Hans in *U 52* proceeded from Cattaro at the end of March for Germany. To the westward of Malta he destroyed two Italian sailing vessels, and then on April 4 appeared off Genoa. The Italian liner *Ravenna*, with 180 passengers on board, found herself torpedoed without warning, and a few hours later the United States steamship *Missourian* saw and avoided the track of an approaching torpedo. The submarine came to the surface and fired a round, whereupon the *Missourian* was surrendered, to be sunk by a few shells at close range. Proceeding westward along the coast route, Lieut.-Commander Hans shortly before midnight observed a large vessel steaming towards Marseilles : she had all lights out, but was clearly visible in the light of the full moon. She was the Ellerman liner *City of Paris* with a general cargo from India and thirteen passengers on board, and she had been following the prescribed route along the Italian coast. In accordance with the regulations for navigation in the Mediterranean, any vessel sighting a submarine made a wireless report, with the code word "Allo" as a prefix; the message was repeated by all shore stations near, and any vessel taking it in had to sheer out to sea so as to avoid the area in which the submarine had been seen. The *City of Paris* took in several "Allo" messages, and by successive alterations of course was now some fifty miles south of Nice. Unfortunately, her manœuvres, instead of saving her, had brought her to the enemy, who stopped her with a torpedo. The crew and passengers boarded the boats in good order. The submarine then came up to them, and Lieut.-Commander Hans demanded the captain as his prisoner. Unable to find him, he fired four shells into the still floating steamer, and finally sank her with another torpedo. The *City of Paris* several times before sinking had signalled her position; but no help came for thirty-six hours. The French patrols at last found three boats; in them were twenty-nine of the crew, lascars, dead from cold. Another boat, with twelve on board, all dead, drifted ashore after four days, and two more boats were never found. Out of the crew and passengers in the *City of Paris* 122 perished.

Meanwhile, Lieut.-Commander Hans had gone in towards Cannes; there in the offing he sank an Italian sailing vessel. Continuing westward along the coast, he cruised between April 7 and 10 off the shores of Catalonia. Here he sank three steamers—one American, one Italian, one French—

stopped and released a Greek steamer, was fired on by a French patrol boat, and missed with a torpedo a British armed merchant vessel. On the 11th he made a wireless signal which enabled the direction-finding stations to fix his position at that moment. He did not remain off Catalonia, but proceeded southward on his journey towards Gibraltar. Before he reached the Straits on the 13th he sank two more steamers, one Danish, and one a defensively armed British vessel, torpedoed without warning. One other of this class engaged the submarine; but the ancient gun with which she was armed broke down at the first round, and she escaped only under cover of the screen formed by the smoke-producing boxes with which merchant vessels were now frequently supplied. U 52 passed the Straits of Gibraltar during the night of April 13-14, and was back in Germany a fortnight later. Outside Lisbon she sank a Greek steamer, and off Finisterre torpedoed a British armed merchant vessel without warning. These with some sailing vessels gave her a total for the voyage of 33,172 tons destroyed in the Mediterranean and 7,792 tons in the Atlantic.

The other cruise to be examined is that of Lieut.-Commander von Arnauld in U 35. He also left Cattaro at the end of March, and his voyage was to prove the longest and most successful yet undertaken by a Mediterranean submarine solely for commerce destruction. He first appeared close to the south coast of Sicily, where he sank a British defensively armed steamer without warning. Proceeding westward to the south of Sardinia, he engaged another British steamer with gunfire, and though she replied with her gun and used her smoke-producing apparatus, she was forced to surrender and give up her captain as prisoner. A cinematograph operator on board the submarine took a record of the scene. Next evening U 35 sank an American sailing ship; and two days later, in the same district, engaged for three hours the British armed steamer *Maplewood*, securing her surrender after the expenditure of over one hundred rounds. The steamer's gun was never within range, and though she fired two hundred shells, none of them reached the submarine. Her captain also was made prisoner.

Lieut.-Commander von Arnauld now crossed to the Algerian coast route. There he would not find any British armed vessels, since by the latest orders they were spread on dispersed routes in the open sea. Off Algiers he attempted to torpedo a French steamer, but missed; and another French vessel on which he opened fire escaped, in spite of sixty shells, by stopping and starting again, thus

throwing out the range of the German gunner. Though *U 35* followed the Algiers route westward she found no more prey on it, but in the open sea she sank a British sailing vessel and a Greek steamer. Late on April 12 she passed through the Straits of Gibraltar, not, like *U 52*, to go home, but to cruise in the western approach to the Mediterranean, an area which had so far been unvisited except by submarines definitely on passage to or from Germany.

For the passage through the Mediterranean British ships were defensively armed; but there were still not enough guns for all vessels approaching the United Kingdom, and on the very day that Lieut.-Commander von Arnauld passed unseen out through the Straits an Admiralty order came to Gibraltar to the effect that any armed vessel bound for the United States or Canada was to dismount her gun at Gibraltar for transference to a ship proceeding to England or Egypt. The order took effect next morning on the steamer *Patagonier*, bound for America. She gave up her gun and proceeded west.

Arnauld's first three victims in his new cruising-area were all from America, bound for Mediterranean ports—two Italians and a Greek. One of the Italian steamers was armed; but such defence as she put up was useless, and she was soon surrendered. The two others could not resist, being unarmed. So also was now the *Patagonier*, which unfortunately met the submarine early next morning 105 miles west of Cape Spartel. She made a fruitless effort to escape, which Arnauld punished by taking prisoner the *Patagonier's* master. He then crossed over to the Spanish side of the Mediterranean entrance. By that time the crews of the sunken ships had landed, and their reports led to the issue of a wireless warning from Gibraltar that a submarine was active near Cape Spartel. It was, however, from the Spanish shore that the next message came, reporting that a Portuguese vessel had been sunk off Huelva. This was not the work of Arnauld, but of Lieut.-Commander Hans of *U 52*, who had passed the Straits of Gibraltar the evening after *U 35* and was taking the direct route for Germany.

For protection of shipping in the area west of Gibraltar the French Morocco Division was nominally responsible. The division consisted only of two or three old light cruisers, more dangerous than useful to employ in submarine-hunting, which, in fact, they had never attempted. But seeing that submarines—it was not known how many—were certainly operating in this rich and unprotected area, the Admiralty ordered Admiral Currey at Gibraltar to use his light craft to

drive them away, and also asked the French to assist. They were setting Admiral Currey no easy task. The force at his disposal consisted of four armed boarding steamers, ten torpedo boats, five sloops, nine trawlers, and seven armed yachts—a total of thirty-five small craft, of which a third were always under repair. With this force he had to maintain the patrol of Gibraltar Straits and of Mediterranean Zone 1, which extended eastward to the meridian of Cape Palos and contained trade routes each 250 miles in length, along the shores of Spain and Africa. His sloops were almost always engaged in the close escort of transports or other important ships bound for Salonica or Egypt. One of these sloops, the *Acacia*, returned from escort at this juncture and was sent to patrol towards Huelva; all other armed vessels available at Gibraltar also went out to the westward.

For patrolling the area west of the Straits, the French kept some submarines at Gibraltar. A German submarine had been expected to arrive off Gibraltar on the 15th from the west, and arrangements were made for three French submarines to lie in wait across its probable track. But at the last moment these orders were cancelled by the French Senior Naval Officer, and the submarines for the patrol were still in harbour, when the undoubted presence of an enemy boat on their patrol line became known. One French submarine left at once with a trawler.

The *Acacia* soon found evidence of the work of a submarine: she picked up boats containing the crew of a Greek steamer, bound from Huelva to the United States and sunk by Lieut.-Commander von Arnauld on the 15th; but although the sloop remained out till the 17th, she saw no more of the submarine. Arnauld was back again on the route due west from Gibraltar. There on the 17th he sank a Russian and three British steamers. One of them was bound to Genoa from the United States, and was therefore unarmed; the two others, in ballast from Mediterranean ports for Baltimore, had given up their guns at Gibraltar under the new order. In the early dawn of the 18th the submarine opened fire on another British steamer, the *Hurst*; but this one was armed, and replied, though all she could see of her assailant was the flash of its gun. Her resistance seemed effectual, for after a short time the enemy abandoned the pursuit of the *Hurst* in favour of a steamer to the westward, which she torpedoed without warning, taking prisoner the captain to add to the five masters she already had on board. This was the furthest westerly point of her cruise—180 miles from Cape Spartel. Next day, April 20, she

attacked five ships. One was a British collier for Tunis and another was on her way from Dakar to Gibraltar; both of these were unarmed and were sunk by gunfire. Another, armed, escaped after half an hour's engagement. Still another, this time a French vessel, escaped by forcing the submarine to chase head on to the heavy seas. A British transport, the *Leasowe Castle*, was now approaching Gibraltar, and Admiral Currey had been ordered to escort her in. Before her escort had made contact with her, the transport, still 100 miles from Gibraltar, reported that she had been torpedoed in the rudder. She had been firing on the submarine which attacked her; but the explosion of the torpedo dismounted her gun and she was left defenceless. Luckily the submarine commander did not press his attack; he disappeared to westward; and since the *Leasowe Castle*'s propeller had not been damaged, she was able to complete her voyage to Gibraltar without further incident.

On April 22 the order as to disarming ships bound from Gibraltar to America was rescinded on a representation from Admiral Currey. To meet the danger to shipping, he now began diverting west-bound traffic along the coast of Africa well to the southward, and for a day or two he suspended the sailing of British and Allied ships as a temporary measure. All he could manage in the way of patrol was to send out an armed boarding steamer and three trawlers along the British track, and four torpedo boats to the coast of Spain. Even these patrols could not be relieved and were only supplied by depleting the forces in the Mediterranean zone under his charge. He asked for destroyers, since the French could supply no fast craft; but he received the usual answer that he must do his best with his present resources, there being no possibility of reinforcement.

Lieut.-Commander von Arnauld had therefore little to fear in the western approach to Gibraltar. He remained there till the 24th, sinking in his last three days two Italians, a Dane and two Norwegians, the last four of these vessels all close to Sagres Point. Two French vessels, both armed, succeeded in discouraging him from close attack, and a British steamer used her smoke-producing apparatus to such good effect that she also escaped. Arnauld passed Gibraltar on April 25, having sunk to the westward of the Straits seventeen vessels totalling 46,854 tons. His operations on the Atlantic side of Gibraltar, disturbing enough at any time, were doubly so at the period he chose. It had just then been decided to experiment with a convoy homeward from Gibraltar. For the safety of the first part

of the voyage Admiral Currey was to be responsible; and, since with such resources as he had he could not hope to protect the Mediterranean part of his station as well, he was given permission on the 26th to abandon the patrol of Zone 1 temporarily, sending ships along the Spanish coast in territorial waters where they should be exempt from submarine attack.

Arnauld, when once again he was in the Mediterranean, at first followed the track of shipping along the coast of Spain; but by April 30 he was back on the southern coast route by Algeria. After a month's trial of the system of dispersed routes for British armed vessels the Admiralty had reverted to the former arrangement, and ships now crossed over to Algeria from near Cape Palos. The U-boat commander made no further attempts on armed vessels; probably his ammunition was nearly exhausted. His one victim on his return journey was a Greek steamer on passage from Tunis to England. When he opened fire on her the noise attracted a French patrol boat, which engaged the submarine at long range, causing it to submerge. But Arnauld had one torpedo left; with this he sank the unfortunate Greek. It was his last exploit on that cruise. A patrolling seaplane attempted to bomb him a few hours later; but he made good his return to Cattaro. In his five weeks' cruise he had sunk altogether nearly 65,000 tons of shipping; he had raided the hitherto comparatively safe area west of Gibraltar; and, as a further disquieting innovation, he had engaged armed merchant vessels with gunfire and in some cases had compelled them to surrender after long resistance. Not only, it would seem, did the armament of the steamers expose them to be torpedoed without warning, but it could not be relied on to save them from a determined assailant.

Even a destroyer escort could not guarantee a ship against disaster. Of all the mercantile vessels at sea those for which the greatest anxiety was felt were the transports carrying troops; these, therefore, in addition to being armed with the best guns available, had always a direct escort of destroyers. Yet on April 15 two of them were lost. The *Arcadian*, carrying over 1,000 troops in addition to a crew of 200 or more, was in the southern Aegean on the way from Salonica to Alexandria when she was torpedoed by an unseen submarine, and sank in six minutes. Only a quarter of an hour before she was struck the men on board had completed boat drill, which circumstance contributed to the perfect discipline which prevailed and to the saving of 1,050 men by the boats and the escorting destroyer. Unfortunately, as the

transport was sinking she turned over, carrying down wreckage and spars, which, when released, shot up like arrows and mortally injured men swimming in the water. From this cause and from the sudden capsizing of the ship 277 men were found to be missing when the roll was called. The transport was in the French zone round the south of Greece, and, three hours after she had sunk, a French destroyer and some French trawlers arrived to assist in the work of rescue. While the *Arcadian* was sinking, a still larger transport, the *Cameronia*, carrying 2,630 officers and men from Marseilles to Egypt, was struck by a torpedo when half-way between Sicily and Greece. There were two destroyers escorting the *Cameronia*; though they had not preserved her from submarine attack, they and some destroyers and other craft sent out from Malta were able to save all but 200 of the crew and troops.

The destruction in one hour of these two large vessels, with the loss of so many lives, was the heaviest blow struck by the U-boats at the transport service since the sinking of the *Royal Edward* in the Aegean in the autumn of 1915.<sup>1</sup> It was a vivid demonstration of what had already been clearly perceived—the menace of the submarine to the expeditions overseas. The First Sea Lord felt compelled to inform the Cabinet that the Admiralty was no longer able to safeguard adequately the communications of the armies in Salonica and Egypt, and he strongly urged that the British contingent at Salonica should be entirely withdrawn. But the Allied policy in force at the time did not permit such a solution of the difficulty, and the base at Salonica continued to be a serious drain on our naval and merchant shipping resources.

There was one feature of the submarine campaign in the Mediterranean which differentiated it from that in Home Waters. The wide spaces and great depths of the Mediterranean were not favourable to minelaying by submarines, and it is not surprising that losses by mines were but a small proportion of the whole. In March two fields were laid off Naples, but neither secured a victim. In April a field laid off Alexandria by *U 73*, shortly after *U 63* had withdrawn from that area, was discovered and avoided without loss. Attempts were made to foul the track along the north coast of Africa, and six separate fields were deposited between Cape Bon and Oran. Four large vessels were sunk by these mines. A curious phase of submarine activity at this time was the bombardment of two villages on the Tripolitan coast,

<sup>1</sup> See Vol. III., p. 112.

possibly with the intention of affecting the native mind in some way.

Although most of the submarines came from and returned to the Adriatic, it was known that there were some at Constantinople, whence they could pass out through the Dardanelles into the Mediterranean. After the evacuation of the Gallipoli peninsula a series of shallow minefields was laid to blockade the exit and to catch submarines and other ships attempting to emerge. In December, 1916, *UB 46*, while endeavouring to return through the Dardanelles, had struck one of these mines and sunk; but this was the only certain success of the fields. By the end of the year the winter gales had set most of the mines adrift; others had been swept up by the Turks; and early in 1917 it was decided that the mined area must be reinforced. In the Mediterranean command there was an opinion that large nets, if moored, would prove a sufficient obstacle to the passage of submarines. But in the Admiralty this form of barrier was already discredited; submarines were known to carry a cutter by the action of which they could easily pass through heavy nets; these, therefore, unless studded with mines, were practically useless. Moreover, it was impossible at the time to supply the quantity of nets that would be required. The decision taken was for another series of minefields, some shallow to catch vessels navigating on the surface, others deep to strike submarines submerged. The first of the 1917 fields was laid off Suvla Bay during the night of April 18, mainly at a depth of 60 feet, though some of the mines were intentionally set to be nearer the surface. Early in May a fresh supply of mines arrived from England, and the reinforcement of the Dardanelles barrage was vigorously continued. Fields were laid on eight nights in May and six nights in June. The enemy appeared to be unaware of what was being done; at any rate, there were no signs of any attempt to prevent the minelayers from reaching their objectives or to sweep up the mines when laid. During the summer months the minelayers were employed elsewhere; but two motor launches had been fitted to lay four mines each, and on several occasions they went close in to the shore, to complete the barrier; they, like the other minelayers, met with no interference from the Turks. In the autumn the large minelayers resumed work, and by the end of 1917 as many as 2,500 mines had been placed in a barrage extending round the exit from the Dardanelles from Suvla Bay on the north shore of the Gallipoli peninsula to Bashika Bay in Asia Minor.

Though this considerable effort was made to prevent

submarines from entering the Mediterranean by way of the Dardanelles, little or nothing was done to blockade the far more important submarine base at Cattaro. This was in the Italian zone, where the authorities were content to rely on the British drifter flotilla as the principal means of hindering the almost daily passages of submarines in and out of the Adriatic. The flotilla consisted of thirty motor launches and 120 net drifters, supplied with depth charges for dropping on submarines which might run into the nets. Each vessel mounted a gun drawn from the reserves of one or other of the Allies, but in no case was the weapon of sufficient size to permit reply to the fire of a submarine which might prefer to fight at the range of its own gun. The flotilla was based at Taranto and had for parent ship the battleship *Queen*, sole remnant of the battle squadron formerly lent to the Italian Government. The rest of the squadron had gone home to be paid off, so that the crews hitherto employed in the ships might be released for service in the rapidly increasing anti-submarine forces in Home Waters. Even the *Queen's* crew had gone home, leaving her in charge of a care and maintenance party. The empty ship formed an excellent depot for the personnel of the net barrage.

The flotilla was under the general orders of the Italian Commander-in-Chief, though directly in charge of Captain A. W. Heneage, who was Commodore of the Adriatic Patrols. By the instructions in force during April the drifters maintained a line of nets from the Italian shore to Fano Island, a distance of forty-four miles, leaving by day a passage ten miles wide along the Otranto coast for ordinary mercantile traffic. At first the motor launches had not been permitted by the Italian authorities to be out at night, owing to their resemblance to submarines on the surface; so that the drifters had to do without protection in the dark hours. But now a scheme of grey-and-white diagonal painting had been adopted for the motor launches; it made them sufficiently unlike submarines to save them from attack by any Italian patrols which might happen to be at sea, but it had the disadvantage of making them conspicuous and robbing them of any chance of surprising submarines. To the north of the net line there was from time to time a group of Italian submarines operating in the middle section of the Strait, and to the southward a few French boats from Corfu patrolled across the Strait. In England, wherever a net line had been operated it was considered that an integral part of the barrage must consist of destroyers constantly present with the double object of forcing submarines to dive and of engaging

them if they should be caught in the nets. But the Italian destroyers nominally appropriated to the Otranto net remained, as a rule, at anchor in harbour, the idea being that if signals for assistance should be received from the drifters the destroyers would then get up their anchors and proceed to sea.

In spite of these arrangements, submarines going from and to Cattaro, which lay some 150 miles north of the net line, seemed to find little difficulty in passing through its area without revealing their presence. During 1916 there had been nine occasions when disturbances in the nets indicated the presence of submarines. The action then taken accounted for certainly two submarines and in all probability two more. The first was the Austrian submarine *U 6*, which on May 13 fouled the nets of the two drifters *Calistoga* and *Dulcie Doris* and, coming to the surface, was sunk by their gunfire; the second was a German boat, *UB 44*, sunk on July 30 by depth charges while still struggling in the net. Two other Austrian submarines were thought at the time to have been sunk by the depth charges dropped on July 8 and 10 over disturbances in the nets, though in neither of these cases did any part of a submarine or its crew come to the surface. Thus the net drifters of the Otranto barrage succeeded in getting rid of at least two submarines before the end of July 1916. From that time onward the enemy became more wary, and the nets caught nothing till December; even then the chase, whatever it was, got away.

The first three months of 1917 passed without any sign that the submarines based in the Adriatic found the Otranto net an obstacle. On April 10, however, something fouled the nets of two drifters in the centre of the Straits; yet, although five depth charges were dropped, nothing came to the surface which could support the idea that a submarine had been destroyed.

Just outside the Straits of Otranto was Corfu, the headquarters of the French fleet. This was to be the meeting place of the Allied admirals who were to discuss in conference the measures to be adopted to secure a more efficient protection for shipping in the Mediterranean. By April 27 all the admirals and officers called to the conference had assembled at Corfu, and the first meeting took place next morning on board the French flagship *Provence*.

Admiral Gauchet, the French Commander-in-Chief, who presided, reminded those present that the Malta Conference of March 1916 had adopted the system of patrolled routes, whereas the London Conference of January 1917 had proposed

a simultaneous trial of the fixed patrolled routes and of the unpatrolled dispersed routes for separate ships; the object of the present conference at Corfu was to compare the two methods and recommend a system for the future. The discussion showed a sharp divergence of opinion, French authorities inclining towards fixed routes, while the British thought more of the dispersing system. The final decision was a compromise. Where coastal routes could be used, ships were to follow them, navigating only at night and anchoring at dawn in one or other of the series of protected harbours; the coast routes and narrow channels elsewhere would be patrolled. Whenever it was necessary to cross the open sea—for example, between Malta and Alexandria—vessels were to be dispersed on individual routes. Important ships were to be escorted for their whole voyage, and advantage of the escort could be taken to the extent of sending with it two additional vessels, but the protection of a convoy of more than three was considered beyond the power of a single escort. Only those craft incapable of acting as escorts were to be used for patrolling, and so little value was attached by the British to the patrolled routes that Admiral Thursby obtained assent to a proposal that troop transports should not approach the coast, but should rely for protection solely on their escorts.

To reduce the number of vessels traversing the Mediterranean the conference recommended that all traffic between the Atlantic and ports east of Aden should go by the Cape of Good Hope, except where military operations would be hampered by the enforcing of the longer voyage. Material and troops for Salonica and Egypt were to come by rail to Taranto and be embarked there.

The recommendations implied an alteration in the method of using the flotillas. This was next discussed. Admiral Mark Kerr, commanding the British Adriatic Squadron, proposed a drastic experiment. He pointed out that the three systems in force—the net barrage, the escorts and the patrols—were each too weak in numbers to be efficient. There were 120 net drifters at Taranto, of which seventy were at sea at a time. Each drifter covered half a mile, and therefore the maximum barrage that could be maintained was a single line of nets over thirty-five out of the forty-four miles of the Strait. His proposal was that for a definite time the whole of the 120 net drifters of the barrage should be withdrawn from the Straits of Otranto and distributed on the patrolled lines. At the end of that time, should the experiment be deemed a failure, the drifters could be sent

back to Otranto, reinforced with vessels from the patrols to make a barrage which would have more hope of efficiency. In effect, his suggestion was to try first a patrol made efficient at the expense of the barrage, and, if that failed to stem the tide of destruction, then to try a barrage made efficient at the expense of the patrolled routes. The proposal was too drastic for the conference, and a majority of the members voted against it.

For a month or more the French and Italian authorities had been examining the question of the erection of a fixed barrage across the Straits of Otranto. This was now brought forward for discussion, and was debated so hopefully that the actual site of the obstruction was settled, and recommendations were even passed for similar barrages off the Dardanelles, in the Gulf of Smyrna and at Gibraltar. In fact, all that was left to be done was the building; and this, as our own experience with the Folkestone-Gris Nez boom had shown, was easier to project than to complete.

Offensive measures in the Adriatic had not been actively pushed, and the conference proceeded to consider what might be done. Operations by large ships had already been dismissed as impracticable while the Austrian fleet remained in harbour; but something could be attempted by other forces. Submarines, for instance, could be constantly on watch in those places where enemy boats were known to pass; off Saseno at the east end of the net line seemed a specially favourable place. It appeared that the Italians had refrained from air raids on the submarine bases and torpedo factory in expectation of the arrival of a fast seaplane carrier; as, however, the enemy bases were within striking distance of the Italian coast, the carrier was not indispensable, and the conference recommended that air raids should be carried out as frequently as possible.

It was obvious that unless the conference could devise some method of improvement, the situation was extremely grave, for the Italians had already announced that, owing to their peculiar dependence upon imports, unless their demands for shipping could be satisfied they must cease offensive action from March 1, and even their defensive operations would be very seriously embarrassed. Using this as a text the Italian representative urged the special need of Italy for protection on her routes for merchant traffic and, in fact, demanded the allocation of more patrol vessels to the routes to and from Italy. This was scarcely possible. By pooling the total resources of the Allies in the Mediterranean, including eight Japanese destroyers which had just arrived, and deducting

the vessels necessary for blockade, sweeping, and guarding bases, it was found possible to keep at sea 112 escorts and eighty-nine patrols. These numbers included the Italian navy. It was difficult to arrive at an accurate estimate of the number of merchant vessels in the Mediterranean; but it was considered that the figure 300 would be approximately correct. Of these 100 would be on the coastal routes and 200 on the high seas. If the vessels on the high seas sailed in convoys of three, a total of 140 escorts would be required against the 112 actually maintainable.

The shortage was even more apparent on the coastal routes. They were 2,030 miles long, and as it was necessary to have an armed vessel for every ten miles of route, to obtain an effective patrol, 203 boats would be required. But only eighty-nine were available, and even these were not always employed to the best advantage, owing to the variations in command in the different zones. The conference therefore decided to recommend the creation of a central authority at Malta to have charge of all arrangements regarding routes, escorts, and patrols throughout the whole Mediterranean. With this final decision the conference concluded its work.

During the four days it had lasted, April 28 to May 1, the movements of eight different submarines could be traced in various parts of the Mediterranean. Between them they sank six large steamers and eight Italian sailing vessels, a total destruction of 27,000 tons of shipping. One of these submarines remained throughout the daylight hours of April 28 off Taormina, on the east coast of Sicily. She began by blowing in half the British armed steamer *Karonga* and taking prisoner her captain. During the rest of that day she raided the fishing fleet, sinking five of the little craft within sight of the shore. She appears to have been left unmolested by the Italian patrol service, although she was close to the important trade route focus at Messina. On the same day the British armed steamer *Pontiac*, on passage from Port Said to Spezzia with maize, was torpedoed without warning and sunk when half-way between Egypt and Sicily; and the British steamer *Teakwood*, also armed, was torpedoed in the dusk without warning about thirty miles west of Cape Matapan. A small Italian sailing vessel was destroyed west of Corsica by *U 33*, which concluded with this success her three weeks' cruise in the Gulf of Lyons. In the western Mediterranean a Spanish steamer was stopped and released by Lieut.-Commander von Arnauld who had by this date re-entered the Mediterranean after his destructive operations

west of Gibraltar, and within sight of the houses on the northern shore of Malta an Italian sailing vessel was sunk by the gunfire of the minelaying submarine *UC 37*. Thus on April 28 there were enemy boats at work in six different districts—Taormina, south of Crete, west of Cape Matapan, west of Corsica, north of Malta and off Andalusia. Further, mines were discovered by the blowing up of a French fishing-boat off Mostaganem, with the result that that port and Arzeu had to be closed to navigation till they could be swept.

The second day of the conference, April 29, was marked by rather better news. One of the Adriatic drifters dropped depth charges on a submarine entangled in the nets and claimed success. Off Marsala at the western point of Sicily one of our submarines, *E 2*, which had been patrolling the south coast of Sicily for three days, sighted an enemy boat engaged in inspecting an Italian sailing vessel which she had fired on and caused to be abandoned. *E 2* approached within 400 yards and fired a torpedo. After wavering a little in its course it passed right under the enemy's conning-tower, but unfortunately too deep to hit. It was some time before *E 2* was again in a position to fire. Strangely enough, the enemy did not move. The reason was soon apparent; just as *E 2* was about to fire her second torpedo, two naked men could be seen to swarm up the conning-tower and disappear into the German boat; presumably they were two of the crew who had swum over to examine the Italian sailing ship. As soon as she had recovered her men the enemy dived, and *E 2*'s second torpedo had no better luck than her first. The Q-ship *Saros* was cruising in the neighbourhood of Pantellaria hoping to be accosted; but the enemy made no further appearance and returned safely to the Adriatic. Another Italian sailing vessel was sunk by the minelayer *UC 37*, which had reached the vicinity of Cape Bon. In the course of the night she laid a minefield off Cape Rosa, the eastern headland of the Gulf of Bona.

After finishing her minelaying, *UC 37*, early on April 30, torpedoed the French transport *Colbert*, which was proceeding from Marseilles to Salonica with 150 troops and 950 mules on board and was then passing fifteen miles from Cape Rosa. The transport was in convoy with another armed steamer, but was not under escort. No one on board saw anything of her assailant till the submarine broke surface half an hour after the vessel sank. The enemy was then fired on by a French trawler, and disappeared. The only other loss on this day was a Greek steamer, in the French coal trade, returning from Tunis to the Tees. She was stopped by

Arnauld and attacked with gunfire. She was only two miles from the Algerian shore, and a French patrol boat was soon on the scene. She did not succeed in saving the Greek, for though Arnauld dived out of danger, he expended his last torpedo in sinking the merchant ship. A little later a French seaplane saw him come to the surface and dropped some bombs in his neighbourhood; they did him no harm, and he regained Cattaro without further incident.

The discovery of *UC 37*'s mines off Cape Rosa on May 1 caused the suspension of all navigation between Algiers and Bizerta for a whole day. Several minefields were now known to exist on the French African coast. They were proving none too easy to sweep, and Admiral Ballard obtained Admiralty permission to abandon at his discretion the Algerian coast route for merchant ships bound to Gibraltar and to disperse them as before. Yet even in the open sea under escort they could not be considered safe. The *British Sun*, with 7,000 tons of oil on board, was on passage from Port Said to Malta and, as beffited so important a vessel, she had an escort of three trawlers, stationed one ahead and one on each beam. Unfortunately they were slow, and the speed of the escorted vessel had to be reduced to 6½ knots to enable her protectors to keep up with her. Though they saw no submarine, a torpedo struck the oiler on the port quarter, and set part of her cargo on fire. A quarter of an hour later one of the escorting trawlers saw a periscope, gave chase and dropped a depth charge, with no ascertainable result. By this time all hope of saving the oiler was gone; she was fiercely ablaze aft, and her captain decided to abandon her. All her crew boarded their boats in good order, taking with them the Japanese quarter-master, who could not be persuaded to surrender the wheel except by force. They transhipped to the trawlers and watched their vessel sink. The oil spread over the sea in a burning sheet, and her last plunge sent up a volcanic eruption of flames.

Some idea of the immensity of the Mediterranean and of the difficulties of protecting ships over its enormous stretches of sea may be gathered from the fact that this lurid scene was being enacted 210 miles from Malta, 660 miles from Alexandria, and 282 miles from Corfu, where the Allied Admirals were debating the methods of overcoming those difficulties. As we have seen, they had just decided to put all the arrangements for merchant ship routes and all the escort and patrol services under one supreme authority.

The Admiralty concurred in all the conclusions of the conference, and requested the Allied Ministries of Marine to

put them into force at once. Although opinion in Whitehall was inclined to doubt the possibility of erecting successful fixed barrages in any of the places suggested, it was decided that technical officers should visit the proposed sites and report on the feasibility of carrying out the work, on the material required, and on the order of precedence in which the barrages should be begun.

As regards the appointment of an officer who should have supreme control of the direction of the routes of merchant vessels and of the escorting and patrol forces, there was some divergence of opinion. The French Commander-in-Chief naturally wished that the new director should be of his own nationality and under his general control in the matter of principles and the main outlines of the scheme of direction. But as the large majority of merchant ships and of patrol and escort vessels were British, the Admiralty could not consent to the appointment over them of a French officer, nor did they feel inclined to agree to the limitations of the initiative of the new officer which seemed to be implied by the insistence of the French Commander-in-Chief on the ultimate control of the work of the office. When, however, Admiral Gauchet urged that at times of emergency he must be in a position to dispose of the whole of the patrol force as required for operations without having to negotiate with a co-equal authority, the Admiralty saw the reasonableness of his demand and gave way on that point. The French made a corresponding concession, and it was agreed that a British Vice-Admiral should be appointed as Commander-in-Chief of the British Naval Forces in the Mediterranean and head of the organisation at Malta for the general direction of routes, which should be entrusted with initiative of every kind. But in order that there should be no doubt as to the supremacy of Admiral Gauchet in the conduct of operations, it was decreed by the Admiralty that the British Commander-in-Chief should fly his flag ashore.

Scarcely had the officers who had assembled at Corfu returned to their stations than the submarines struck down another important ship in circumstances which threw further doubt on the possibility of securing safety even when the maximum of protection was given. The large transport *Transylvania*, with 3,000 soldiers on board, left Marseilles for Alexandria in the evening of May 3. In accordance with the usual routine, she was accompanied by two destroyers; they were both Japanese vessels, the *Matsu* and *Sakaki*.

When the Japanese Government decided in February to send eight destroyers to work in the Mediterranean, they

specially arranged that the boats should not be under British or French orders, and despatched with them Rear-Admiral K. Sato, flying his flag in the light cruiser *Akashi*, to take command of them. Though he was not to take orders from any of the Admirals in the Mediterranean, he was instructed to work in co-operation with the British authorities and to help in any way desirable. The most obvious need was for more escorts; and convoy work, since it seemed to offer the best chance of contact with enemy submarines, naturally commended itself to the Japanese naval officers. Since the arrival of Admiral Sato's destroyers in mid-April they had been acting as escorts, the *Transylvania* being so far the most important vessel of which they had taken charge.

She followed the coast route south of France, and in the evening of May 3 passed the Franco-Italian border line. About a day ahead of her was a convoy of four ships bound for Italy, under the escort of an Italian cruiser. The cruiser went in to Genoa in the afternoon of May 3 with one of the ships, leaving the others to continue their voyage unescorted. One of them, the British steamer *Washington*, was shortly afterwards torpedoed and sunk by an unseen submarine. This disturbing fact was presumably reported to the *Transylvania*, which was steaming towards the same area.

The transport was zigzagging at 14 knots, and was about forty miles from the position of the loss of the *Washington*, when she also was struck by a torpedo, which holed her in the port engine-room. She was immediately headed for the land, little more than two miles distant. One of the Japanese destroyers, the *Matsu*, went alongside to take off the people on board, while the other circled round to look for the submarine. Twenty minutes later a torpedo was observed approaching the *Matsu*. She backed at full speed, and the torpedo struck the *Transylvania*, which now began to sink. In less than an hour she was gone. Of her passengers and crew all but 270 were saved by her own boats, the Japanese destroyers, and Italian patrol vessels which arrived on the scene as she sank.

Before leaving the neighbourhood of Genoa this submarine torpedoed three more vessels, all British and all armed. Luckily they were all close inshore, and managed to beach themselves. She appears to have gone south on the 8th. Her raid had the effect of stopping all departures from Genoa for several days. Among the vessels held up there was a transport with Australian troops.

*Attack on the Otranto barrage. Action in the Adriatic*

One of the points discussed at the Corfu Conference had been the possibility of further Allied operations in the Adriatic, and it had been decided that little more could be done until the Austrians showed more activity with their surface ships. This, as it happened, was what the enemy were actually contemplating, and a fortnight later the barrage and the Italian communications across the Straits of Otranto had to endure the first serious attack of the war.

The drifter barrage had now become a serious embarrassment to the submarines passing in and out of the Adriatic. By the end of April seven submarines had reported themselves incommoded by either the motor launches, the drifters or the aircraft acting in connection with it. Already four small attempts to damage it had been made: on March 11 four Austrian destroyers came out to explore it, but were seen only by a French submarine on watch; a reconnaissance on April 21 ended in the sinking of an Italian steamer outside Valona Bay; and two other destroyer cruises were made on April 25 and May 5, but failed to find any craft to attack. At last the inconvenience to the submarines decided the Austrian Commander-in-Chief, Admiral Njegovan, to make an expedition in greater force, and deliver a double attack, on the drifter line and on the Italian transports which were now passing every night between Italy and Valona. As both the proposed objectives lay to the south of Brindisi, the forces employed would run the obvious risk of being cut off from Cattaro by an Anglo-Italian counter-attack. The Austrian admiral therefore took every precaution that could ensure their return. On May 14 he sent out three submarines — *U 4* to lie off Valona, *UC 25* to mine the exits from Brindisi, and *U 27* to cruise on the line between Brindisi and Cattaro. These were to strike at any forces which might be drawn out from Brindisi by the main attack. The raid on the drifter line was to be made by the three cruisers *Novara*, *Saida*, and *Helgoland*<sup>1</sup> under the command of Captain Horthy of the *Novara*, and that on the transports near Valona by the destroyers *Czepel* and *Balaton*. The two attacks were to be approximately simultaneous. Afterwards, the raiding forces were to return to Cattaro, the destroyers leading by about twenty miles. By this time it would be light, and aircraft

<sup>1</sup> 3444 tons, 9—3·9" guns, 27 knots.

from Durazzo and Cattaro were to scout for and attack any forces coming out from Brindisi.

By the ordinary routine in force, the drifters had no protection, and the only regular patrols were carried out by submarines. On the night of May 14 there were two of them on watch—the Italian *F 10*, south of Cattaro, and the French *Bernouilli*, north of Durazzo. Admiral Alfredo Acton, the Italian Commander-in-Chief, knew or guessed that a move by the Austrians was imminent, but he does not appear to have been sure of their objective. He had therefore to make such dispositions as would cover the unprotected coastline and its exposed railway near Brindisi, and would also meet a blow aimed at Valona or at the barrage. To do this, so far as it could be done, he sent out at 9.0 p.m. on May 14 a group of four French destroyers, the *Commandant Rivière*, the *Bisson*, the *Cimenterre*, and the *Boutefeu*, under the command of Captain Vicuna in the Italian flotilla-leader the *Mirabello*. Their orders were to steam south-east at about ten miles from the coast, and to cross the Straits at midnight; when eight miles to west-south-west of Cape Linguetta they were to turn north and make for Cape Rodoni, which they should reach at about half-past four; then to come south again and reach a point on the latitude of Valona at about seven in the morning. This position proved, in the event, to be ten miles to the north-east of the actual rendezvous for the Austrian light cruisers, so that the Admiral's dispositions were successful in ensuring that contact should be made with the enemy early in the morning, and that the bulk of his own forces should be placed between the enemy and their base by daylight. As he could not hope for anything like a decisive action in any other conditions, he felt bound to make this the cardinal point of his policy. The other alternative open to him, that of keeping the *Mirabello*'s division patrolling the drifter line all night, would not have afforded an adequate protection, and would have left open the Austrian line of retreat after their cruisers had struck their blow. It would also have made Admiral Acton dependent upon the scanty and confused reports of a night action when he moved out from Brindisi to cut off the enemy. Whether by chance, or as a result of accurate intelligence, the Austrian Admiral's plan for an attack on the Valona supply ships was equally well designed. A convoy of three Italian steamships escorted by the Italian destroyer *Borea* had left Gallipoli at ten o'clock in the forenoon of the 14th, and was under orders to be at the entrance to the Valona swept channel at a quarter-past seven on the following

morning. The strait was to be crossed by the usual transport route which made the Albanian coast at Strade Bianche, a conspicuous white patch on the mountains about twenty miles south of the entrance into Valona Bay.

The convoy, in line ahead, with the *Borea* leading, reached this point by 3 a.m. on May 15.<sup>1</sup> It was a calm night with scarcely a ripple on the water. As they turned to a north-north-westerly course the moon, which had just risen above the mountains, was on the convoy's starboard quarter. It was still very dark and shadowy under the land, when suddenly Commander Franceschi in the *Borea* became aware that there was a considerable volume of smoke on his starboard bow, moving past him at high speed. In reply to his challenge the two enemy destroyers, *Czepel* and *Balaton*, switched on searchlights and opened fire. Commander Franceschi swung his ship round to starboard to get between the Austrians and his convoy, but the enemy's first round had severed the *Borea*'s main steam-pipe, and she could not complete the turn. In a very short time she was disabled and sinking. Of the transports, one carrying munitions caught fire and blew up, another was soon blazing fiercely, and the third had been hit. For some reason the Austrians did not sink her, but steamed away northward.<sup>2</sup>

By this time the three Austrian cruisers had found and passed through the line of net drifters. Admiral Acton, if indeed he had suspected any immediate raid by the enemy in this direction, had given no warning to the officer in command of the barrage, and the drifters, in consequence, took the Austrian cruisers to be friendly ships. The nets at the moment were being managed by seven groups of drifters, each group averaging seven vessels, the groups evenly spaced between Fano Island and Santa Maria di Leuca. It was not till the sound of the attack on the Italian convoy was heard by the easternmost group that they had any suspicion that the enemy were out. Even then they stubbornly determined to keep their stations and continued to shoot their nets for two hours after the sounds of gunfire had ceased. Then they had their own danger to face. The three cruisers had turned and now began a systematic destruction of the barrage. Each took a third part of the line, and steaming slowly along it called on the crews of the drifters to abandon their ships. In some cases the men, feeling their position to be hopeless, obeyed the order and were taken as prisoners on board the

<sup>1</sup> See Map 10.

<sup>2</sup> The fire on the second transport was extinguished, and she was towed in; the third reached Valona under her own power.

Austrian cruisers, which then sank the empty drifters by gunfire. But others, in spite of the heavy odds, would not give in so tamely.

Skipper Joseph Watt of the *Gowan Lea* had been in action before, on December 22, when his little craft was riddled by an Austrian destroyer. When now the cruiser, which was attacking the western section, loomed up at 100 yards distance and ordered him to surrender, he called on his men to give three cheers and fight to a finish. Putting on full speed, the tiny *Gowan Lea* charged for the enemy, firing her one small gun<sup>1</sup> till a shell disabled it, and her only chance of offence or defence was gone. The gun's crew, continuously under heavy fire, still tried to make it work even after a box of ammunition had exploded and smashed the leg of one of the crew. It never seems to have occurred to Skipper Watt or his men that they should surrender; they applied themselves to the task of getting their gun into action; and when the cruiser passed on, thinking probably that the vessel's crew could not have survived such a fire as she had poured upon them, they were still at work on the dislocated breech-block. The drifter next to the *Gowan Lea* was called the *Admirable*. A shell exploded her boiler and her crew jumped overboard. But one man, seeing her still afloat, scrambled back on board and ran towards the gun. It was clearly his intention to fight the Austrian cruiser single-handed; but a shell from her struck him dead before he could fire a round. At the other end of the line were similar scenes of gallantry. The *Floandi* was a group leader, and bound to set a bold example. To the heavy fire of the *Novara*, Skipper D. J. Nicholls replied with his six-pounder gun; a wound, a second wound, even a third could not move him from his place of command. His enginemen were as resolute as he; one of them was killed at his post and the other wounded. At last the cruiser moved on, leaving the little *Floandi* maimed but undefeated. These encounters recall the immortal fight of "the one and the fifty-three"; but even the odds against Sir Richard Grenville can scarcely have reached such a height as in the action between the Austrian cruiser and Skipper Watt of the *Gowan Lea*.<sup>2</sup> When the cruisers had finished their work and steamed away northward, of the forty-seven drifters fourteen had been sunk; three others, seriously damaged, were still afloat on the calm moonlit sea.

The two groups of drifters in the middle of the line suffered little. The cruiser detailed for this central section

<sup>1</sup> 57 mm. (2½ in.).

<sup>2</sup> Skipper Watt was awarded the V.C.

was slow in arriving, and the group commanders, alarmed by the firing to east and west of them, had ordered their drifters to slip nets and scatter. The only vessel caught by the cruiser was one which had steamed off eastward instead of north-westerly like her consorts. Though the group leaders whose boats carried wireless apparatus sent out warning signals, no one at Brindisi took them in, and Admiral Acton's first news of either part of the double attack came from the lookouts on Saseno Island at the mouth of Valona Bay, who, hearing firing, guessed that the convoy expected at dawn was in danger. Their report reached Brindisi at 3.50 a.m. Italian time,<sup>1</sup> and, being in Italian code, was not understood by the British and French officers there. But Admiral Acton, before an hour passed, had ordered the *Mirabello* to steer southward, as there were enemy ships in Otranto Strait.<sup>2</sup> The *Mirabello* and her detachment were then north of Durazzo. They turned due south and steamed past Durazzo Bay at about twenty miles distance from the land. There were now only three French destroyers with the *Mirabello*, since one, the *Bouleau*, had been compelled by condenser trouble to return.

Of the Brindisi squadron under Admiral Acton the *Bristol* and four Italian destroyers were at half an hour's notice for sea, and the *Dartmouth* was to come to the same state of readiness at 5.30. The third British light cruiser, *Liverpool*, was at six hours' notice, and her engineers were at work on her boilers. The state of the Italian vessels is not known. Admiral Acton embarked with his staff in the *Dartmouth*, and ordered the readier part of his squadron to sea as soon as possible. The *Bristol* with the Italian destroyers *Mosto* and *Pilo* was first away; she left harbour shortly after five o'clock, the Italian admiral following some twenty minutes later in the *Dartmouth*, with the Italian destroyers *Schiaffino* and *Giovanni Acerbi*. He had ordered his light cruiser *Marsala*, the two destroyer leaders *Aquila* and *Racchia* and the destroyer *Insidioso* to join him as soon as they were ready. The *Aquila* left soon after the Admiral sailed. It was now some three hours since the transports had been attacked, but as Brindisi is forty miles nearer to Cattaro than either the drifter line or the spot where the transport had sunk, there was some chance of his being able to bring the enemy to action. By a quarter to seven the Brindisi detachment was concentrated and was steaming to the north-eastwards at 24 knots on a roughly formed line abreast. During the concentration Admiral Acton received a message

<sup>1</sup> One hour fast on G.M.T.

<sup>2</sup> "0435. Unità nemiche in canale Otranto dirigentes per sud."

from Captain Vicuna in the *Mirabello* to say that he was in contact with three ships of the Spaun type.

The position at seven o'clock was thus a rather curious one. The Brindisi force under Admiral Acton was on a north-easterly course between Brindisi and Cape Rodoni; twenty-five miles to the south-eastward of him were the *Czepel* and the *Balaton*, of whose presence he was still ignorant; and forty-six miles to the south-south-eastward were the three Austrian light cruisers with the *Mirabello*'s detachment on their heels. The enemy forces nearest to him were, therefore, those of which he knew least at the moment.

Captain Horthy was also still ignorant of the position. His destroyers, having turned south to close him at a quarter-past six, had not seen anything of the Brindisi forces under Admiral Acton; and, though the aeroplanes from Cattaro were rapidly getting a picture of the situation, they had not yet got a signal through to him. So far as he knew, therefore, the *Mirabello*'s detachment was the only Allied force with which he would have to deal. He opened fire on them at ten minutes past seven; but the action never became close; as the *Mirabello*'s captain made a complete circle a few moments later to avoid a submarine.<sup>1</sup> Shortly after half-past seven Captain Horthy received messages from the *Czepel*, the *Balaton* and the Cattaro aeroplanes that there was a force of seven light cruisers and destroyers to the north of him.

The two destroyers had at last come into touch with the Brindisi force. It was not, however, till twenty minutes later that Admiral Acton attempted to attack the two Austrians. The Italian destroyers, led by the *Aquila*, then closed in and opened fire when they were at a range of 12,500 yards.

In the action which followed, the Austrians were helped by two aeroplanes from Cattaro, which managed to report the fall of their shot. At half-past eight the *Czepel* hit one of the *Aquila*'s boilers and brought her to a standstill. Having inflicted this damage on the Italians and suffered little themselves, the two Austrian destroyers made good their escape into shelter behind the batteries of Durazzo. Admiral Acton did not know that the Austrian destroyers he had just engaged were leading the *Novara* group of cruisers; the *Mirabello*, he knew, was in touch with these, and from her signals he thought they would be found to northward of him. The *Mirabello*'s positions as signalled, however, were wrong; the Austrian cruisers were astern of him, and were, in fact, rapidly closing the immobilised *Aquila*, which he had left

<sup>1</sup> Probably *U* 4, which had been watching Valona.

behind. At nine o'clock the *Bristol* reported smoke astern, and soon the three cruisers could be made out. Admiral Acton turned at once. By 9.30 he was within range and was covering the *Aquila*, which also joined in the firing. Captain Horthy had thus two British light cruisers and some Italian destroyers ahead of him, and the *Mirabello* and three French destroyers following him astern. Seven or eight Austrian aeroplanes were overhead menacing the British ships. One, indeed, dropped two bombs close to the *Dartmouth*. Italian aeroplanes from Brindisi attacked them obstinately, but appeared to get the worst of the air combat.

On the sea the action went against the Austrians. The opening range was about 12,000 yards, and in the first few minutes one of the *Dartmouth's* six-inch shells hit the *Novara* near the fore-bridge, and killed Commander Szuboritz, the second in command. Captain Horthy, who had formed his cruisers in line ahead and taken the head of the line, at once ordered smoke screens to be sent up, and boldly closed the range in order to use his 3·9-inch guns with better effect. In this he was partially successful; for the *Dartmouth*, which was hit three times in all, suffered a certain amount of damage in the first part of the action. Also, the *Bristol*, whose bottom was very foul, began to drop behind, and the three Austrian cruisers concentrated their fire upon Admiral Acton's flagship. Captain Horthy was, indeed, very near scoring a success; but just as he was getting the *Dartmouth's* range, he seems to have feared that the French destroyers to the south of him were likely to be dangerous; so he turned back to his north-westerly course and opened the range again. He need have feared nothing from the division with the *Mirabello*. She herself had just discovered that water was leaking into her oil tanks, and had been obliged to stop. Almost simultaneously condenser trouble brought another of the French destroyers to a standstill. The remaining two French destroyers stayed behind to guard their consorts against submarine attack; so that the *Mirabello's* division was out of the reckoning. Admiral Acton felt obliged to leave two of his destroyers with the *Aquila*; and thus the *Dartmouth* was left with only two Italian destroyers to continue the action, the *Bristol* some way astern doing her best to keep up.

It was now ten o'clock. Reinforcements were coming out from both Brindisi and Cattaro. At the beginning of the action Captain Horthy had signalled for help, and in less than an hour a heavy cruiser and five torpedo craft were on their way to join him. The *Marsala*, a flotilla leader and two Italian destroyers had left Brindisi at half-past eight.

They had first steamed towards Valona, but were now steering northward to join Admiral Acton. Further, the French Commander-in-Chief at Corfu, though he had received from Brindisi no direct information of the Austrian raid, guessed from intercepted messages that an action was in progress, and sent three French destroyers to assist. These were now north of Valona Bay.

During the next quarter of an hour the firing increased in intensity, and at ten minutes past ten Captain Horthy was struck by a splinter; he tried for a few minutes to keep command, but fainted, and Lieutenant Witkoroecski took charge. At a quarter-past ten the *Bristol* checked her fire, as she had by then fallen some way behind; and for some twenty minutes the *Dartmouth* continued the engagement alone. When the *Bristol* began firing again, she was between 14,000 and 12,000 yards from the last ship in the enemy's line, so that throughout the fighting the brunt of it fell upon the *Dartmouth*.

The action seems to have been at its height between half-past ten and eleven o'clock. It was then that Admiral Acton opened out the range and slowed down in order to allow the *Bristol* to close; and it was then, also, that a shot from the *Dartmouth* damaged the *Novara*'s engines. Just before eleven the Austrian's speed was rapidly falling off; but Admiral Acton was no longer in a position to press his advantage: in spite of the damage to the *Novara* the Austrians had drawn ahead, and whilst the *Dartmouth* had slowed down for the *Bristol* they had increased their lead. There was, of course, nothing to tell him that the *Novara* was in serious and increasing difficulties, and he decided that he would gain nothing by continuing a running fight towards Cattaro in which the Austrians had the heels of him. The *Saida* had trailed behind the other two cruisers and was some way astern; the *Marsala*'s division was to the southward. Admiral Acton therefore turned sharply to port just before eleven o'clock, hoping to cut off the straggler and force her down upon the *Marsala* and her consorts. He was too far off to succeed in this, but the *Dartmouth* and *Bristol* crossed under the *Saida*'s stern at a fairly close range and straddled her. The manœuvre seemed promising, in that the *Saida* sent out a distress signal as the two cruisers closed on her; but it does not appear that she was badly hit during the last outburst of rapid fire. Austrian aircraft at this time made a strong attack on the two British cruisers, dropping bombs and sweeping their decks with maxims. No damage was done either by bullets or bombs.

As Admiral Acton turned to the south-west he sighted smoke to the northward, and realised that reinforcements had come out of Cattaro and were approaching. He therefore continued southward to close the *Marsala's* division, and joined up with them at about half-past eleven. Then turning northward again he followed the *Novara*.

In the meanwhile things had not gone well with the Austrians. The shot from the *Dartmouth* which had done most damage had put one of the *Novara's* main feed pumps out of action, and perforated the auxiliary steam-pipe to the starboard turbine. Some time after eleven she stopped altogether, and Lieutenant Witkorocski had to signal to the *Saida* to close and take her in tow.

This was observed from the British ships. But the heavy cruiser from Cattaro was also in sight, and not wishing to attack a force which included such a formidable vessel, Admiral Acton at noon turned towards Brindisi. To the south of him was the *Aquila* in tow by the *Schiaffino*, with the *Mosto* escorting them. The *Mirabello* had joined up with one of the Corfu destroyers, and was towing the French destroyer which had broken down. These detachments reached Brindisi without any further accidents; but the cruisers still had to suffer the most serious blow of the day.

They were in line abreast with destroyers ahead and on the flanks. Shortly before two o'clock, while still forty miles from Brindisi, the *Dartmouth* was hit on the port side by a torpedo fired by a submarine, and for a time seemed about to sink. Two of the Corfu destroyers hunted the submarine and kept her down while the other two cruisers steamed on at full speed for Brindisi. The torpedo had come from *UC 25*. She had seen nothing of the various forces which had come out of Brindisi that day, but found herself by chance on the track of the returning cruisers and made a lucky shot. For a time the water gained in the *Dartmouth*, and Captain Addison, after putting the crew into the Italian and French destroyers, returned on board with a special party of officers and men, who succeeded in partially righting the ship and re-raising steam. A tug arrived late in the evening, and the *Dartmouth* and her escort got into Brindisi at three on the following morning. Even this did not end the list of successes which the Austrians could count to their score: during the afternoon the destroyer *Boutefeu*, which had been ordered out to assist the *Dartmouth*, struck one of the mines laid off the harbour by *UC 25* and sank rapidly.

The raid on the Otranto barrage demonstrated with  
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painful emphasis the defencelessness of the drifters against a night attack from the north. Yet it seemed hardly likely that the raid would be repeated except at night; the light hours could be reckoned as fairly safe; and the drifters continued to maintain the barrage, though until some sort of protection could be arranged for them they were ordered to operate only in the daytime. Not until July were the Italians able to provide any man-of-war cover: throughout June the barrage drifters returned at dusk to port either at the east or west ends of the net line.

## 3

*Submarine Warfare, May to August 1917*

The other attempt to obstruct the emergence of submarines from the Adriatic—the Allied submarine patrol off Cattaro and in other likely places—which had been maintained by the force of Allied submarines based on Brindisi, at last bore fruit. The first success fell to the French submarine, *Circe*, watching outside Cattaro on May 24. She observed a submarine on passage outwards, escorted by destroyers and aircraft. Being in a good position for firing she sank it by two torpedoes, and managed to escape unseen. The boat she had destroyed proved to be *UC 24*. This success caused an intensification of the enemy precautions and rendered remote the chance of repeating the stroke. In fact—perhaps in consequence of the raising of the net barrage every night—submarine activity showed some slight increase in June; even so it was possible to doubt whether the nets, when in place, were any real obstacle to the passage of U-boats. Twenty-four separate cruises of submarines can be traced in that month; five of them began in May, and seven, commencing late in June, continued into July. Though the number of vessels destroyed, ninety-four in all, was the same as that for April, less than half were steamers, and the mercantile tonnage sinkings decreased from 218,000 in April, the worst month, to 133,000 in June.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Mercantile tonnage destroyed by submarines in the Mediterranean.

| 1917. | No. of<br>Steamers. | No. of Sail-<br>ing Vessels. | Total<br>Tonnage. | Percentage of<br>World Total. |
|-------|---------------------|------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------------|
| Jan.  | 12                  | 2                            | 58,800            | 22                            |
| Feb.  | 27                  | 21                           | 100,000           | 21                            |
| Mar.  | 17                  | 18                           | 54,000            | 11                            |
| Apr.  | 51                  | 43                           | 218,000           | 26                            |
| May   | 38                  | 43                           | 146,700           | 26                            |
| June  | 41                  | 53                           | 133,700           | 21                            |

Among the innumerable examples of heroism shown by the men of the merchant service the action of the *Manchester Trader* falls to be recorded here. She was an Admiralty collier on her way home after being cleared at Mudros, and was a few miles from Pantellaria early on June 4 when a submarine began to fire on her from a range of about five miles. The master, Captain F. D. Struss, sent out wireless calls for assistance, and replied to the fire with his own gun, not so much with the idea of hitting his assailant, for he was outranged, but to make the submarine keep its distance. Nevertheless, the German made several hits on the *Manchester Trader*, till Captain Struss conceived the idea of swerving every time he saw the flash of the enemy's gun. He then found, as he afterwards wrote to his owners, that he "need take on board only one out of three or four shells, the others either just striking sliding blows on her sides or missing altogether." After two and a half hours of this duel he found that he had only seven shells left. One of these was loaded into the gun, and he was waiting for a good chance to fire, when a shot from the submarine burst so close to the gun that it caused the precious shell to explode, killed the leading gunner, and put the gun out of action. The enemy soon discovered that the *Manchester Trader* was defenceless, and quickly overhauled her, firing rapidly as she approached. All the crew, mostly aliens, were under cover; the only people exposed to this shelling were Captain Struss and an apprentice named Sutcliffe, a lad of seventeen years old, who was at the wheel when the action commenced and remained there throughout the four and a half hours of its duration. At length Captain Struss admitted the hopelessness of his position and abandoned his battered ship. Knowing that submarines made prisoners of the masters of vessels which offered resistance, he had changed into a suit of dungarees. He thus escaped recognition; and further, when the submarine commander came up and asked for the master, the crew all shouted that he had been killed. The answer was so extremely probable that it satisfied the German. He took away instead the second mate, who by silently accepting captivity showed a fine loyalty to his skipper. The submarine then began again to shell the abandoned steamer.

At this point help arrived. A trawler, forty miles away when she received the S.O.S. call from the *Manchester Trader*, reached her while the submarine was still firing. After a few shots from the trawler the enemy drew off at fast speed and eventually disappeared. In spite of what the crew had endured only one man, the gunner, had been killed. Among

the awards which so gallant a fight deserved, Sutcliffe, the lad at the wheel, received the medal for Distinguished Service.

The most destructive cruise of any submarine in June was one by Lieut.-Commander von Arnauld in *U 35*. As before, he chose the western approach to the Straits of Gibraltar, where he had had such success in April. Since his return the area had been visited only by *UC 73* coming out from Germany for the Adriatic. She spent the last half of May outside Gibraltar, but did not succeed in rivalling Lieut.-Commander von Arnauld's previous cruise, partly because west-bound shipping was twice held up for periods of several days. A French submarine watching near Cape St. Vincent saw *UC 73* and discharged two torpedoes; but the circumstances were not entirely favourable, and the German boat was not hit. She entered the Mediterranean at the end of May, and reached Cattaro after a six-weeks' voyage.

Lieut.-Commander von Arnauld passed westward through the Straits a week later. The first notice of his presence on this former cruising ground of his was received at Gibraltar on June 9 from the *Tregarthen*, which escaped after attack about ninety miles west of Cape Spartel. As soon as this news reached the Admiralty they ordered all west-bound vessels at Gibraltar to be held up. It soon appeared that the *Tregarthen* was not the first vessel attacked: early on the 8th Arnauld had sunk a British vessel, which, though armed, was unable to contend with the submarine's gun, and being without wireless apparatus, could not send out warning signals or calls for assistance. However, the sound of the firing was heard at Cape Spartel, and three sloops and a torpedo boat from Gibraltar went out to investigate. They found much wreckage. Two French submarines accompanied by British trawlers cruised off Cape St. Vincent, and armed yachts, torpedo boats, and motor launches patrolled as far to the westward as they could get. These patrols, combined with the warnings sent out to shipping by wireless from Gibraltar and with the fact that all vessels of any size were now defensively armed, may have tended to reduce Arnauld's chances of fruitful attack. His operations in the Mediterranean approach lasted a little more than a fortnight. He sank eleven ships, totalling nearly 31,000 tons; eight armed vessels kept him at a distance till he either broke off the engagement of his own accord or departed on the arrival of a patrol; three others, torpedoed without warning, made their way into port.

The Admiralty's instructions that west-bound shipping

was to be held up at Gibraltar soon produced congestion. By the evening of June 14 there were forty-two ships awaiting permission to sail westward, and although there were then only two sloops available to patrol to westward, the traffic had to be released with instructions to reach Cape Spartel at or soon after dusk and follow the African coast as far as the parallel of 35°. On the 16th fifteen ships sailed. Only one was attacked. A torpedo passed along her side without exploding. Looking in the direction from which it had come she saw the submarine breaking surface. She fired three rounds at it and thought she hit it; the submarine did not reply, but dived rapidly and made off.

While Lieut.-Commander von Arnauld's cruise was in progress, the German submarine *UC 52*, on passage from Germany, put into Cadiz for repairs. Since the damage to her was in the nature of machinery breakdown due to the action of the weather, the Spanish authorities permitted it to be put right on condition that the submarine when she left should refrain from attacking any vessel during her voyage to the Adriatic. The progress of the repair was carefully watched by our agents at Cadiz, and when on the 27th they reported that she was ready to sail, our own submarine *E 38* went out and lay off the port to catch her. The U-boat slipped out two nights later when it was very dark and managed to get past *E 38* without being sighted. A sweep by four torpedo boats and four motor launches from Gibraltar also failed to locate her, and she reached the Adriatic safely, having carefully refrained from attacking any merchant ships. After this episode, the Spanish Government announced that any submarine taking refuge in Spanish ports would be interned.

At the end of March the Germans had announced their intention to sink hospital ships in the Mediterranean, alleging as their reason for this callous breach of international law that the vessels were being used for the transport of troops and ammunition. The allegation was totally unfounded, but it seemed possible that the threat might be carried out, and the hospital ships were held in harbour till some arrangements for their protection could be made. Four British destroyers had just been allocated to work on the Otranto barrage under Admiral Kerr; they were now kept back to act as escorts for the threatened vessels. By April 15, after the hospital ships had been kept in harbour for a week, they were allowed to resume sailings, each to have an escort of two destroyers when carrying sick and wounded. They were to zigzag and to be darkened at night; in fact, they were to take the same precautions as if they were troop-ships. Further, they were

to take precedence over troop-ships as regards the supply of escorts, the consequent delay in the movement of troops being accepted as necessary. From that time onwards hospital ships surrendered their immunity from attack. There was no long delay: on May 26 at 7 p.m. the two hospital ships, *Dover Castle* and *Karapara*, both clearly painted as such, were steaming in company eastward along the Algerian coast under the escort of the destroyers *Cameleon* and *Nemesis*, two of those intended for the Otranto barrage, but allocated, after the German announcement, to the defence of hospital ships. Suddenly there was an explosion; the *Dover Castle* had been torpedoed by an unseen submarine. She immediately manned and lowered all her boats, and by 8 p.m. all the patients were clear of the ship. The *Karapara* had been ordered to proceed into Bona, the nearest port, her attendant destroyer putting up a smoke screen which effectively hid the hospital ship from view. Both arrived safely at Bona. Meanwhile the *Cameleon* picked up the patients from the *Dover Castle's* boats, went alongside to take on board the remainder, and departed also for Bona, her commander considering the safety of the 950 lives on board his destroyer more important than the possible saving of a damaged ship. There still remained in the *Dover Castle* her captain and a volunteer party preparing her for being towed if that should prove feasible. Before the *Cameleon* passed completely out of their sight another torpedo hit the *Dover Castle*; this one was fatal, and she sank in  $2\frac{1}{2}$  minutes. The party boarded a boat, and were picked up six hours later by a French patrol. Owing to the calm and clear weather, and to the perfect discipline which had prevailed throughout, the loss of life was small: out of the 841 on board the hospital ship, patients and crew, only six stokers were killed or drowned, probably at the time of the explosions.

There were now so many vessels being torpedoed while under what had been thought was a strong escort that the actual disposition of the destroyers in this instance was specially investigated. The practice adopted by the senior of the two escorting officers was to station a destroyer on each side abaft the beam of the convoy. This arrangement was the result of careful thought and of discussion with other patrol officers. It was generally recognised that a submarine's best chance of hitting a ship was to fire from a position off her bow; and to frustrate this method of attack it had been usual to place the escort ahead of the beam. But it was now known that the transport *Transylvania* and other ships had been torpedoed by submarines firing from

astern of the escort; and as in such cases the destroyers had to turn before they could get into position for dropping depth charges, the result was that the submarine escaped. The new idea was that, if the escorting destroyers were stationed abaft the beam, an attacking submarine would be ahead of them, and therefore liable to instant attack when sighted. Unfortunately, on this occasion, the enemy was not sighted, and the destroyers had no chance to attack. The Admiralty disapproved the innovation; they considered it was framed to utilise the convoy as a decoy rather than to prevent the submarine from firing from her most favourable position. After this, therefore, the former practice was restored, and escorts were always stationed on the bows of their convoys.

The necessity for escorting hospital ships continued for several months in spite of negotiations with the German Government to secure their safety. In June the Berlin Admiralty staff agreed to refrain from attack on hospital ships provided they were under the constant supervision of neutral commissioners who would remain permanently on board; only those ships which carried such commissioners were to wear the Red Cross or special markings, and none of them was to be escorted by armed vessels; a special route was not obligatory. Here the King of Spain lent his assistance, and Spanish officers were appointed to embark as commissioners. Some months elapsed before the new arrangement was in working order; but by undertaking to guarantee to the satisfaction of the German Admiralty the employment of hospital ships for no other purpose than the conveyance of sick and wounded, the Spanish Government ended a particularly revolting phase of submarine war as conducted by Germany, and rendered a memorable service to humanity.

The submarine which had sunk the *Dover Castle* appears to have been a UC-boat. Coming out of the Adriatic about May 23, she torpedoed and sank the British steamer *Elmwood* close to the south point of Sicily, and then, proceeding along the French African coast, where she sank the *Dover Castle*, mined Algiers about the 27th. The minefield, though it hindered navigation, caused no losses. The submarine continued her cruise until about June 9, and it was most probably this boat which fought the gallant *Manchester Trader*.

The losses in June included two transports, the *Cameronian* and the *Cestrian*. Each was accompanied by a pair of escorting ships, and each was torpedoed by an unseen submarine. The *Cameronian* was on passage to Egypt with mules, and when still some fifty miles short of Alexandria

was sunk in the dark hours before dawn on June 2. The soldiers on board her were only those in charge of the mules. She sank five minutes after being struck, but the loss of life would have been small if the explosion had not instantly flooded a deck on which were forty men sleeping in hammocks. The loss in the *Cestrian* was fortunately lighter still. She was in the Aegean, carrying horses, but had on board also more than 800 soldiers. She was torpedoed at 9.30 a.m. on the 24th, but did not sink till 2 p.m. Perfect discipline was maintained, and the loss of life was confined to three members of the crew killed by the explosion of the torpedo. The torpedoing of the *Cestrian* was one of the rare successes of the Constantinople submarines, which since the declaration of unrestricted warfare had been operating intermittently in the Aegean. It was the work of *UB 42*, then commanded by Lieutenant Schwartz. This boat had been out in February and again early in April, and had sunk a few sailing vessels. On her second cruise she had also torpedoed the sloop *Veronica* not far from Alexandria and had put her out of action for some months. The other Constantinople boat operating in the Aegean was the submarine minelayer *UC 23*, which in May and June mined the approaches to Salonica, and also on her second cruise had the fortune to sink two steamers;<sup>1</sup> but *UB 42's* destruction of the *Cestrian* was so far the greatest achievement of the Constantinople flotilla. The loss caused us a good deal of anxiety, for she was taking part in a considerable transference of British troops from Salonica to Egypt.

Possibly as a result of the Allied blockade of the mainland of Greece, which had begun in December 1916,<sup>2</sup> anti-Royalist feeling had by this time begun to make progress. The islands, one by one, declared for the Provisional Government conducted by M. Venizelos under the ægis of France, and trade from them was permitted to non-blockaded ports. At Crete, the headquarters of the Provisional Government, a Venizelist army was drilling. Its preparations had so far advanced that from May 17 onwards a division was transferred to Salonica to relieve British troops. These Greek troops were carried in Greek vessels, each being given an escort of two ships provided from the British First Detached Squadron, which was based on Candia and was responsible for all escorts in the Aegean. There were only enough escorts available for two transports a day, but at the actual rate of embarkation this number proved sufficient

<sup>1</sup> *Der Krieg zur See.* Die Mittelmeer Division. Kap 25.

<sup>2</sup> See ante, p. 171.

to enable the movement of Greek troops to proceed smoothly. Mines were reported off Candia on the 22nd; but a channel was swept in time for the transports to proceed in accordance with their programme. The British troops moved from Salonica to Egypt consisted of the Sixtieth Division and the Seventh and Eighth Mounted Brigades—in all some 21,000 officers and men and 8,500 animals. These were conveyed in sixteen voyages, each transport having an escort of two destroyers and returning for another load as soon as it had disembarked at Alexandria the troops and animals that had come on board at Salonica. The voyage took from three to four days. The move began on June 1, and continued throughout the month, coming to an end on June 30, when the headquarters Staff left Salonica for Alexandria. Throughout the sixteen voyages, the only transport to meet a submarine was the *Cestrian*, torpedoed and sunk on June 24. It was her third voyage during the move, and she had already safely transported 1,600 men of the Sixtieth Division.

The fear of mines at Salonica, aroused by the report that a submarine had been sighted near the harbour, caused all sailings to be suspended from June 7 to 9. When they were resumed, a fresh movement of French troops threw an additional burden on the transport and escort services; the move of the Sixtieth Division went on, but until the French troops had all been despatched to their new destination the Venizelists in Crete were held up for lack of escort. This French force had been ordered to the mainland of Greece to ensure a favourable termination of the political crisis which was rapidly approaching in that country. On June 5 a French plenipotentiary, Monsieur Jonnart, arrived at Athens, with instructions to assume the direction of Allied affairs and policy in Greece. He was also to intimate to King Constantine the desire of the Allies that he should abdicate until the war was over. This demand was to be backed up by a show of force sufficient to overawe any resistance that the Royalist party might wish to offer; and it was for this purpose that French troops were now being moved from Salonica to the Piraeus. A French naval squadron arrived there on the 5th, and in the evening of the 10th a number of transports came in to the Piraeus. During the forenoon of June 12 the troops in them, about 8,000 French and 3,000 Russians, landed, nominally for purposes of health; but they disembarked under the guns of the French squadron, which included the battleships *Justice* and *Vérité*, the latter flying the flag of Vice-Admiral de Gueydon.

That morning, June 12, King Constantine abdicated in favour of his second son, Prince Alexander. All was quiet in Athens, and Admiral Hayes-Sadler, who, in the *Implacable*, was watching events, reported that this was "due chiefly to the powerful influence of the King, who proclaimed to the people that his departure was provisional only, and that as it was the only method of saving the dynasty, any attempt to prevent it would have the effect of destroying the monarchy and the nation." Two days later the blockade of Greece was raised. Its enforcement had been carried out mainly by the French, in whose zone western and southern Greece lay, and by the British Third Detached Squadron based on Salonica. Its cessation freed a certain number of small craft for other duties; and the situation rapidly cleared. Before the end of June Monsieur Venizelos became Prime Minister; on June 27 Greece definitely joined the Allies and declared war on the Central Powers. Venizelos then requested France to return the Greek fleet to Greece; he announced his intention of defensively arming Greek shipping, and asked that Greece might be responsible for the defence of one of the patrol zones.<sup>1</sup> Thus the political problem in the Mediterranean, the dubious position of Greece, was at last solved, with the Allies, represented by France, in control.

There remained, however, the naval problem—the submarine campaign—and no final solution of this was at present in sight, though a favourable change had, in fact, begun. The losses from submarine action certainly showed a marked and progressive reduction after April of this year. In that month fifty-one steamers were sunk and the total was 218,000 tons; in July the number of steamers sunk was twenty-two and the total tonnage 85,000. The convoy system was now in full operation in the Eastern Mediterranean for vessels other than those important enough to receive a special escort. But, as has been noted before, this special escort did not always succeed in baffling attack. For instance, the *Eloby*, on Admiralty charter conveying munitions and some hundreds of soldiers from Marseilles to Salonica, was torpedoed when in convoy with one other ship and under the escort of a French destroyer. The shock of the explosion set off the ammunition, and a terrible destruction of life resulted. There were several other losses in convoys of this type, among them the large P. and O. liner, *Mooltan*, which with another vessel was under escort by two Japanese destroyers. She had

<sup>1</sup> It was not till February 25, 1918, that French opposition to this last request could be overcome. Greece was then permitted to patrol a small zone including the Piraeus.

554 souls on board, but by the skilful handling of the destroyers, who promptly put up a smoke screen, all except one were saved.

A striking example of the impunity with which submarines could attack vessels presumably well protected and in patrolled areas was the fate of the *Mongara*, a P. and O. liner, on passage from Port Said. In the afternoon of July 3 she was approaching Messina in company with an Italian mail boat, and was escorted by an Italian destroyer ahead and an Italian armed trawler astern. Already, when off Catania, she had seen a torpedo coming for her, and had avoided it by putting her helm over. She had a line of men on the lookout all round the ship, and a particularly keen watcher in the crow's nest. When Messina breakwater came in sight the destroyer went on ahead into port, and in view of the narrowness of the strait and the necessities of navigation, the *Mongara* ceased zigzagging and steamed on to a course for entering harbour. She was still a mile from the breakwater when a torpedo from an unseen submarine struck her, and she sank in a few minutes. This was presumably the work of a UC-boat, which, after mining Malta and Syracuse, had penetrated into these narrow waters. The minefield at Malta also cost us a ship. It was not laid in the swept channel maintained by the minesweepers of the port, and no damage could well have been done by it so long as ships followed the prescribed route. But, unfortunately, a hospital ship under escort of the two sloops *Aster* and *Azalea* took a wrong course right over the minefield. The hospital ship herself escaped unhurt; but the *Aster* struck a mine and sank, and the *Azalea* was so damaged as to need extensive repair.

The British type of large convoy, five or six vessels in close formation escorted by four trawlers, came into force on the Malta-Alexandria route about the end of May. Until then ships had been escorted singly to Suda Bay and taken on from there by a fresh escort, but Admiral Ballard now organised a system of through convoys whereby ships went the whole distance without calling anywhere or changing escorts. The first convoy of this type—four ships with four trawlers escorting—left Malta on May 22, and a similar convoy proceeded from Malta either for Bizerta or Alexandria practically every day thenceforward. From Alexandria west-bound a similar convoy proceeded every other day with the escort which had brought a convoy from Malta. In the Western Mediterranean between Bizerta and Gibraltar ships followed the coast route under the protection of French

patrols, very important vessels being given a special escort and following a devious route in the open sea.

The first loss among the Malta convoys occurred on June 20, when the *Ruperra*, one of a convoy of six ships for Bizerta, escorted by four trawlers, was torpedoed by an unseen submarine. A month passed before there was another loss. On July 16, a convoy of six vessels in two lines was on its way from Malta to Alexandria with four trawlers escorting, when the *Kephren*, a large British vessel leading the port line, sighted a periscope close on her starboard beam, between her and the leader of the starboard line. The *Kephren* turned and opened fire, but at the same time observed a torpedo so close that it was impossible to avoid it. It struck her, and she sank in four minutes. In spite of the rapidity of the accident, every one of her crew was saved, only one man being injured by fragments from the shell of the other convoyed ships, which, being in close order, were within range of the periscope, and instantly opened fire on it. These two, the *Kephren* and the *Ruperra*, were the only losses among the 275 vessels escorted in the Malta convoys from their inception on May 22 to the loss of the *Kephren* on July 16.

Although the anti-submarine forces could not claim a definite success in July, they had certainly succeeded in making the enemy's operations more difficult. Among the numerous comparatively fruitless cruises of submarines was that of a boat which left Cattaro at the end of June. On July 1 she was sighted by French aircraft from Corfu, and hunted by them and by Italian torpedo boats. Three days later she was seen south of Sicily by a French gunboat, which headed for her and forced her to dive. There was a convoy within sight, but it did not alter course and was not attacked. Proceeding westward, the submarine came upon a pair of ships escorted by another French gunboat. She torpedoed one of the ships, but was at once forced to dive by the gunboat, which had seen her periscope and dropped depth charges on her. These had no fatal effect, for on July 6 she was off the west point of Sicily, and there destroyed a small Italian sailing vessel, the *Roma*. Since the one boat of this craft was so smashed as to be unseaworthy, the submarine took the *Roma*'s crew on board, while she cruised for two days in the area between Cape Bon and Sicily. During that time she made no attacks. At noon on July 8 the crew of the *Roma* were called on deck and ordered to embark in the boat of another small Italian sailing vessel which the submarine had arrested and blown up with a bomb. She then apparently cruised in the neighbourhood of

Cape Bon for another fruitless three days, after which she was sighted, out of range, by a French destroyer off Bizerta, and again by an armed French merchantman, also out of range, next day. On the 13th a P. and O. liner sighted her periscope right astern. The liner fired one round, and the periscope disappeared; it had not been seen by the escorting destroyer. Another steamer was in sight, heading in the opposite direction; this vessel saw nothing of the submarine and was not attacked. The U-boat continued cruising in the neighbourhood of Bizerta, where on the 14th she was twice seen, once by a French tug and once by a French patrol vessel, which fired on her and made her dive. Still cruising fruitlessly, she was sighted the following evening by a French destroyer escorting a couple of vessels. The French boat had a torpedo at the ready in her tube; she discharged it at once, but the submarine was quicker and dived. When the torpedo reached her she was deep enough for it to pass right over her. The destroyer had followed her torpedo, and passing over the submarine's wake, saw the submarine itself below the surface, outlined in phosphorescent light. She dropped a depth charge on it. When the turmoil due to the explosion had subsided no more could be seen of the enemy boat, and nothing came to the surface to give evidence of a hit. Although the submarine seemed to have escaped damage, she now abandoned the busy area off Bizerta and started for home. On her way she fired on a small Italian sailing vessel and sank a Greek steamer outside the Adriatic. In her three weeks' cruise she had been bombed by aircraft and fired on several times by patrol boats and defensively armed merchantmen; she had twice been depth-charged and once had narrowly escaped a torpedo. Her cruise, too, from the point of view of warfare on merchant shipping, was ineffective: she had sunk one steamer of 2,358 tons and four sailing vessels whose united tonnage made up an equal amount.

Another system of periodical convoys was organised by the Italians for the supply ships coming to Italy from Gibraltar. Vessels with speeds of over 12 knots were allowed to proceed alone; but slower ships were collected in convoys of four, each convoy being escorted by one armed merchant cruiser. By this means an average of 190 ships a month sailed from Gibraltar for Italian ports. Although one cruiser and eleven armed merchant cruisers were allocated by the Italian Admiralty specially to work this convoy system, there was sometimes difficulty in arranging an escort, and some convoys left with no further protection than could be expected from one well-armed consort. Nevertheless, Admiral Heath-

coast Grant, who succeeded Admiral Currey at Gibraltar on July 5, was able to report that the system was successful and showed the advantage of convoy over single ships on passage. Actually, the only steamer lost in July on the coast route between Gibraltar and Naples was an Italian vessel torpedoed without warning at night between Genoa and Spezzia.

Towards the end of July the British ocean system of large convoys was introduced for the passage from Gibraltar to England. It did not apply to ships faster than 11 knots, and consequently excluded all the more important vessels, such as liners, transports, and ships with specially valuable Government cargoes; but in the convoys were collected the tramp steamers, returning colliers, iron ore ships, and others without which neither the war nor the trade of the Allies could continue. The most dangerous parts of the voyage for these Gibraltar convoys were the beginning and end. The vessels were met on approaching England by destroyers and screened in; but for the danger zone between Gibraltar and Cape St. Vincent they had to rely on such protection as could be provided from Admiral Heathcoat Grant's forces. In addition to his own auxiliary patrol vessels, the Admiral had four French submarines and a few trawlers from the French Morocco Division. To these last he delegated the patrol of the trade route between Cape St. Mary and Cape Trafalgar, a stretch which included Cadiz and the iron-ore port of Huelva. The British patrol vessels under his command he distributed at four principal stations—one to the westward of Cape Spartel, which was the converging point of all shipping bound in or out of the Mediterranean, one between Cape Spartel and Gibraltar, one across the strait off Gibraltar itself, and one east from Gibraltar along the coast of Spain, which was the route for all east-bound traffic. When a convoy had to be screened out, these patrols were necessarily depleted, and the Admiral therefore asked for large reinforcements. These, as it happened, had been arranged, and on August 1 he learned that before October the French Morocco Division and a flotilla of United States gunboats would arrive to swell his anti-submarine forces. But to protect the July convoys he had nothing beyond his original resources, fifty-four armed craft of all kinds for all purposes; even of these he had constantly to employ the best in the escort of important single ships bound to and from Malta.

The first of the convoys left Gibraltar at 8 p.m. on July 26, containing thirteen ships of various Allied nationalities, the largest being an Italian of 4,500 tons, bound to Wales for coal. The convoy had an ocean escort of one Q-ship; from

Gibraltar to the meridian of Cape St. Vincent it was accompanied by two sloops, an armed boarding vessel and two torpedo boats, all from Gibraltar. A submarine was known to be operating off Cape Finisterre, but this was not on the route, and when the convoy started, no submarine was known to be in the Gibraltar danger zone. But shortly after its departure a report came in from a French armed trawler that she had engaged a U-boat about twenty miles north-west from Cape Spartel, uncomfortably near the track which the convoy would follow. Several more reports of this submarine were received before the convoy was clear of the danger zone, but nothing was seen of the enemy, and the only loss sustained was from a collision in which a French vessel rammed one of the escorting sloops and so badly damaged herself that she sank.

As yet, no convoy system for outward-bound vessels from home had been introduced. One of these, the *Manchester Commerce*, with 6,000 tons of Welsh coal for Toulon, was the first victim of the submarine waiting off Cape Spartel. The collier was torpedoed before she saw anything of the enemy, the explosion wrecking her wireless and preventing the despatch of an Allo message. But this area off Cape Spartel was patrolled by Gibraltar torpedo-boats, and one of them, hearing the explosion, came up within twenty minutes after the ship had sunk, and rescued the crew in their boats. Three large merchant vessels left Gibraltar that day, July 29; but the second convoy, which should have sailed on the 30th, was held back when news came in that morning of the sinking of two more large east-bound colliers in the same area. This time the submarine was sighted by a torpedo-boat, which dropped three depth charges on her, but without any apparent effect. The *Implacable*, the last of the fully commissioned British battleships in the Mediterranean, was then at Gibraltar ready to sail for home, and two destroyers were with her as escort. She was detained until the moon, which was nearly full, should have waned. But although the convoy was kept back, a large Clan liner and a hospital ship sailed from Gibraltar for home on the 30th.

The submarine news on July 31 was more reassuring. Oil was still rising from the spot in the Spartel area where the three depth charges had been dropped, and the natural inference was that the U-boat was there on the bottom disabled; the only enemy reported in the Mediterranean approach was off Cape Trafalgar in the forenoon. The convoy, eight ships, sailed at 8 p.m. with a powerful escort of destroyers and sloops; it would be well clear of the Cape

Spartel area before dawn. It was accompanied through the danger zone by five vessels bound for the United States; they were to separate from it at the meridian thirty miles west of Cape St. Vincent. Although there was still submarine activity in the waters through which the convoy passed, it was not molested, and it reached England safely. The U-boat had apparently crossed over to the line of approach from the south to Cape Spartel. There on August 1 she fired a torpedo at and missed a British steamer whose master in return attempted, though unsuccessfully, to ram her. An hour later another British steamer in the same area was fired on until a Gibraltar sloop came up and drove the submarine away.

The next convoy was due to leave on August 4. The small numbers in the previous convoys, eight and thirteen respectively, surprised the Admiralty. During the first six months of 1917 ships had left Gibraltar westward for English and French ports at the average rate of six a day. Now, in the last ten days of July only twenty-one had left. The Admiralty had expected many more. As a matter of fact the low numbers were purely accidental: all vessels approaching from the east had been called in to Gibraltar, and those of suitable speeds were not allowed to leave except in the convoys. On August 4 the third convoy sailed with more normal numbers; there were twenty vessels in five columns; and three ships bound for America left with them, to part company as before when beyond the danger zone. The U-boat had now gone back to the coast of Spain, where in the afternoon of the 3rd she destroyed by gunfire a Norwegian steamer off Huelva. An unusual incident marked the passage of the convoy. By 10 a.m. on August 5 it was about ninety miles west of Gibraltar. At this point the *Ryton*, the second ship in the port wing column, struck some submerged object, and a few seconds later struck it again. The force of impact was enough to crush in the hull of the steamer so badly that she sank shortly afterwards. It seemed most probable that what had been struck was the U-boat, and that it could scarcely have survived two such shocks. But here again the vitality of the submarine was under-estimated. It must certainly have been dangerously injured; but it managed nevertheless to travel 1,800 miles and to reach a German port in safety.

From this time onward convoys left at regular four-day intervals without any noteworthy incident; altogether seven proceeded in August, with a total of 110 ships. The Mediterranean-bound vessels continued to arrive singly even after

mid-August, when a system of out-bound convoys from home was introduced. At the parallel of Cape Finisterre, these out-bound convoys dispersed, the ships then proceeding independently to their destinations. It is significant that the losses in the Mediterranean approach now occurred only among these dispersed and independent ships.

By this time the discussions with the French as to the nationality of the officer who was to be in supreme control of routes and patrols in the Mediterranean had been settled. On June 9 the French had accepted the principle that a British Admiral should take charge of this important branch of anti-submarine warfare. The officer first selected for the new post, which was to include that of Commander-in-Chief of all British forces in the Mediterranean, was Admiral Wemyss. He was relieved as Commander-in-Chief, East Indies, on July 21 by Rear-Admiral Ernest F. A. Gaunt, who had been serving as a Rear-Admiral in the Grand Fleet. The opportunity was taken for separating Egypt from the East Indies command, and Rear-Admiral Thomas Jackson took over as Senior Naval Officer, Egypt, the next day, his command including the Red Sea as far as the Straits of Bab-el-Mandeb. By these two changes—the appointment of a Commander-in-Chief of the British Naval Forces and the removal of Egypt and the Red Sea from the East Indies command—the Mediterranean as a British Naval Station was restored to the position of importance it had held before the convention of August 6, 1914, when the French assumed supreme command and the British Mediterranean forces were reduced to a cruiser squadron. The new arrangement had not been necessitated by any pressure by the enemy's surface ships, to which the French alone showed an overwhelming numerical superiority; it was the submarines that by their activity in these waters had brought back a British Commander-in-Chief to the Mediterranean.

Although Admiral Wemyss was the first choice, it was not he who actually arrived to take up the restored command. As soon as he reached home, he was appointed to the Admiralty as Deputy First Sea Lord to Admiral Jellicoe, whom he afterwards succeeded; and Vice-Admiral Sir Somerset Gough Calthorpe was sent out as British Commander-in-Chief in the Mediterranean. The terms of this officer's appointment, dated August 6, made him head of the organisation to be set up at Malta for the general direction of routes, including escort and patrol duties, and made him also director within his command of the anti-submarine operations of the British and French naval forces. The Italians had not consented to put

their patrol and escort services under the general command, preferring to manage their anti-submarine operations themselves in their own zones. But subject to the general authority of the French Commander-in-Chief, Admiral Calthorpe was to lay down the principles to be observed in the control, escort, and navigation of all mercantile traffic in the Mediterranean. He hoisted his flag on August 26. Simultaneously, the outlying squadrons suffered a reduction in status. Vice-Admiral Thursby was relieved by Rear-Admiral Sydney R. Fremantle, and the Eastern Mediterranean Squadron over which the latter hoisted his flag on August 25 became the British Aegean Squadron. Admiral Mark Kerr went home, leaving Commodore Heneage in command of the British Adriatic Squadron; and Admiral Ballard at Malta ceased to direct operations.

## CHAPTER IX

### UNRESTRICTED SUBMARINE WARFARE

1

*February to April 1917*

WE have already noted that the battle of Jutland, in spite of the fact that it was not fought to a finish, had in reality ended one stage of the naval war and defined the form and method of the final struggle. That our enemies were the first to recognise this and frame their action accordingly, is not to be wondered at : they were driven by a necessity which, though ruinous, was unavoidable. The British navy might still cherish confident hopes of a second and more decisive general action ; the German Naval Chiefs had been instantly compelled to realise that if Great Britain was to be overthrown at sea, the blow must be struck, not by the High Seas Fleet, but by the submarines ; there remained no alternative but unrestricted U-boat war. The moment of decision could not be foreseen by the British Admiralty or the War Cabinet, but they knew that it could not be long delayed : they were not privileged to follow in detail the struggle which was going on at Pless between the counsellors of violence and the counsellors of prudence and moderation, but the diplomatic strain between Germany and America was visible to all the world. In Great Britain there was probably no one in any responsible position who had not for some months past realised and gravely weighed the coming danger.

Late in October, 1916, Admiral Jellicoe wrote to the Admiralty that there appeared to be "a serious danger that our losses in merchant ships, combined with the losses in neutral merchant ships, may, by the early summer of 1917, have such a serious effect upon the import of food and other necessaries into the Allied countries as to force us into accepting peace terms which the military position on the Continent would not justify, and which would fall short of our desires." Admiral Beatty was still more emphatic : he spoke of the

danger as "jeopardising the fate of the nation and seriously interfering with the successful prosecution of the war." What followed was a complete recognition of a very disturbing situation. The Government had replied to Admiral Jellicoe's letter by inviting him to confer with them in person, and this he did on November 2 in London. The serious feature of the campaign was, as he pointed out, that the submarine attack was being extended steadily westwards into the open waters at the outer end of the English Channel. The Admiralty, in an official memorandum to the Government, took the same view as Admiral Jellicoe, and added a still more discouraging comment. "Of all the problems which the Admiralty have to consider," they wrote, "no doubt the most formidable and the most embarrassing is that raised by submarine attack upon merchant vessels. *No conclusive answer has as yet been found to this form of warfare; perhaps no conclusive answer ever will be found. We must for the present be content with palliation.*"

The consultation between the Government and Admiral Jellicoe was followed by a conference at the Admiralty, which further emphasised the perplexity of the situation. This conference was, by its composition, representative of the highest naval opinion, yet it only seems to have been unanimously agreed upon one single point: the need for appointing an officer of high rank to co-ordinate and control all anti-submarine operations. This result accurately represented the general state of naval opinion, which was at the time very undecided. The prevailing anxiety had called out a large number of suggestions from naval officers of all ranks. The remedies they proposed differed widely. A powerful body of opinion was in favour of an attack upon the German coasts. Admiral Bayly at Queenstown had suggested this long before, and during the autumn of the year Captain Percy Royds sent in a strongly-worded paper advising an attack on Zeebrugge. Commodore Tyrwhitt pressed for an attack on the Zeebrugge locks; but after a conference between him and Admirals Jellicoe, Bacon and Oliver, the Admiralty decided that the scheme should not be proceeded with.

A number of other naval officers put forward plans for intensive mining as the desired cure; and there was certainly a group of far-sighted men who realised that if the merchant service was to be protected, it would have to be placed under escort. Those who at this stage foresaw the measure which was in the end to save the situation deserve to be honourably and gratefully remembered.

For the present, however, there appeared to be only one

point on which there was anything like a general measure of agreement—it was evident that many naval officers considered the command of the anti-submarine forces to be too much decentralised and divided. As a result of the conference, therefore, it was decided to create a special division of the Admiralty for controlling and co-ordinating the operations of our anti-submarine forces, and to place a Flag Officer in charge of it. Admiral Duff was the officer selected; he had been Second in Command of the 4th Battle Squadron of the Grand Fleet, and possessed the confidence of Admiral Jellicoe in a high degree. Both these officers left the Grand Fleet to take up their new duties at Whitehall in the first days of December.<sup>1</sup>

## 2

*The Admiralty's Appreciation*

Shortly after Admiral Duff took office, the Admiralty made an exhaustive survey of all the methods and devices of anti-submarine warfare then in force, and outlined their future policy with regard to them. These measures fall roughly into two classes: those which were items in the general plan of attacking U-boats wherever they could be found; and those which were intended to give better protection to merchant shipping.

1. It was proposed that, as soon as possible, detachments of destroyers and "P" boats should be based at Portsmouth and Devonport for the sole purpose of hunting submarines. As a general rule, destroyers and "P" boats at the principal bases had either been detached from their escorting or patrolling duties to undertake a hunt, if the Admiralty or the local Commander-in-Chief thought it advisable; or else they had turned automatically from their ordinary duties to attack a submarine if it was known to be operating within striking distance. It was therefore now suggested that special "hunting patrols" should be formed in order to leave the remaining patrol forces free to carry out their ordinary work. It would follow that these hunting patrols, in the course of their duties, would acquire a specialised knowledge of anti-submarine tactics.

The Admiralty were also pressing forward certain other measures, which, though they were classified separately in the general appreciation or survey of the position, were

<sup>1</sup> For Admiral Jellicoe's appointment to the post of First Sea Lord, see *ante*, p. 71.

really complementary to the plan of constituting these special hunting flotillas. The most important of these complementary measures was the organisation of air patrols at various points on the south coast; attempts were also being made to organise ships fitted with hydrophones into special detachments which should always operate together. These hydrophone patrols became immensely important later on; but at the time a suitable hydrophone had still to be designed, and the Admiralty remarked, with regard to this new measure, that experiments were being carried out in the Solent "with a certain measure of success."

2. A variety of special measures with regard to mining were being considered. The Admiralty attached very great importance to a project that had recently been put forward for laying deep minefields on the tracks that German U-boats were known to be using, and for stationing so many patrol craft near the fields that the U-boats would be compelled to dive into the danger zone. In addition to this, it had been suggested that a fleet of motor launches should lay mines in shallow waters close up to the mouths of the German rivers, and should mine the submarine tracks off the German harbours. The Admiralty had recently decided to lay a mine barrage across the Heligoland bight; the fields which composed it would be of various sizes, and laid at varying depths, so that the different projects in the Admiralty summary of anti-submarine warfare were little but suggestions on points of detail in this larger and more comprehensive plan.

3. The Admiralty were considering a number of plans for constituting special submarine patrols at the northern exit to the North Sea. There was nothing that was absolutely new in any of these plans, and their exact significance can only be understood by reviewing the strategical and tactical employment of the British submarine flotillas since the war began.

The original war orders to the fleet divided the available British submarines into a number of local defence flotillas and a striking force. The local defence flotillas, which were largely made up of the older "A," "B" and "C" boats, were allocated to the defended ports in the Channel and the east coast. The striking or overseas force was based on Harwich, and was composed of the newer "D" and "E" boats. The original war orders stated that this overseas force was to be used offensively towards the German coast and for reinforcing Cruiser Force C, which would be employed with the first and third flotillas in the eastern approaches to the Channel and the southern part of the North Sea. From

the beginning of the war, therefore, a considerable number of older submarines were allocated to coast defence duties. On the other hand, the submarines patrolling in the German bight had collected a large amount of information with regard to the local German patrols, and had torpedoed five German warships between August 1914 and July 1915; so that during the first year of the war the submarines had proved of more utility as an outpost than as a coast defence force. The German staff, it would seem, were conscious that we had pushed out patrols too close to their bases; for their defensive minelaying during the first year of the war was evidently intended to force our submarine patrols to move further out.

In the summer and autumn of the year 1915, the Commander-in-Chief asked that three submarine units, each consisting of a destroyer and three submarines, should be attached to the Grand Fleet. They were to be based on the Tyne, and were apparently to act as an outpost to the Grand Fleet during operations against the High Seas Fleet. In October 1915 the *Titania* and the 11th Overseas Flotilla were attached to the Grand Fleet and based on Blyth. In their general instructions two duties were assigned to them: to act as a coast defence and anti-invasion force if the Germans raided the British coast north of Flamborough Head, and to patrol north of the line bounding the zone watched by the Harwich flotilla.<sup>1</sup>

Although from the beginning of the war our older submarines had been intended to act as a coast defence force, they were not so used when the need arose. When, in April 1916, Admiral Boedicker bombarded Yarmouth and Lowestoft, the defence of the south-eastern coast and of the Flanders bight fell entirely upon Commodore Tyrwhitt's destroyers and the overseas submarine flotillas. The Admiralty's instructions to station a force of submarines "at gun range" off Yarmouth and Lowestoft were not carried out by the local commander, and the result was that the submarines were not put to a practical test as a coast defence force during the war. None the less, the idea persisted that this was one of their most important strategical uses; and when it was recognised and admitted that the Grand Fleet ought only to come south of the Dogger Bank in quite exceptional circumstances,<sup>2</sup> an additional importance and emphasis were given to the anti-invasion duties of the submarine fleet. In August 1916 a balance was struck between the old duty of maintaining offensive patrols in waters where German forces were likely

<sup>1</sup> The line of division was from Flamborough Head to Lyngvig.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 49.

to be found, and the equally old, but now more exacting, duty of protecting the east coast against raids or invasion. An additional flotilla was allotted to the Grand Fleet, all the submarine forces on the east coast were strengthened, and the North Sea was divided into four submarine patrols. The Maas patrol (1 submarine) and the Terschelling patrol (5 submarines) were to be maintained from Harwich, and the Horn Reefs and Skagerrak patrol (4 submarines) from the Tyne and Tees. This distribution of force and this allocation of duties lasted, without much alteration, until the end of the year 1916. The idea of using British submarines against the German U-boats, and of incorporating our submarine flotillas in the anti-submarine forces, dates from the early autumn of 1916, when the Commander-in-Chief appointed a Grand Fleet committee to inquire into the matter. They did not report until February 1917, and in the meantime the new Commander-in-Chief, Admiral Beatty, sent in a forcible criticism of the existing organisation. Ten submarines out of the eighty-six which were available were patrolling in the enemy's waters; the remainder were kept ready to meet an imaginary danger of invasion. Even those submarines which were out on patrol worked in an isolated, unco-ordinated way, and had achieved nothing commensurate with the losses they had incurred. The existing system of sending out submarines to patrol and cruise within special areas, without specified objects or objectives, was radically at fault, and must be changed. As a provisional remedy the Commander-in-Chief urged that the submarine flotillas should be re-grouped and reorganised. Forty boats of the newer types should be attached to the Grand Fleet and employed in continuous specially devised operations. The defensive coast patrols should be maintained entirely by the older "C" boats.

The Admiralty could not agree outright with Admiral Beatty's drastic proposals; they replied that "submarines now constitute our principal defence against raids of all kinds." They were, none the less, most anxious that our flotillas should be employed to the best advantage in the campaign against the German U-boats: the point still unascertained was what distribution of our submarine forces would be the best adapted to the purpose in view. British submarines might, as the Commander-in-Chief suggested, be concentrated in the North Sea, to be used offensively against German U-boats entering or leaving the Bight; or they might be distributed over the bases in the western approach area, for the defence of trade. Expert naval opinion had not decided which of these two solutions was the better. Since the first

days of the war, our submarines on patrol had been on the lookout for enemy submarines, and had attacked them whenever they could. The results did not suggest that our submarines would be very successful if they were organised to act exclusively as an attacking force against the enemy's U-boats. Since the beginning of the war, British submarines on patrol had established contact with the enemy's boats on fifty-six occasions ; they had only attacked them six times, and out of those six attacks three had been successful. Figures like these showed that if used in anti-submarine warfare, submarines would probably be more useful for watching and locating enemy boats than for attacking and destroying them. Whether submarines could be used with any success for the defence of trade was equally doubtful. It was not seriously held that submarines could act as a direct cover and escort for merchantmen ; but some naval officers thought that submarines might be used for patrolling the outer approach routes to the west of Ireland and the Scillies. Their power to keep the sea for long periods gave them an ability to move successively from one threatened zone to another which was not possessed by the types of surface ships ordinarily used in patrol operations.

When the Admiralty drew up their appreciation of the state of things at sea at the beginning of the year 1917, they were keenly aware that our own submarine flotillas might be used to greater advantage ; but they had not committed themselves to any one of the conflicting opinions before them, nor had they devised a means of reconciling their own views with those expressed by the Commander-in-Chief. The proper strategical and tactical use of submarines in submarine warfare was still undecided.

4. In addition to this, the Admiralty were considering a suggestion which involved a new tactical employment for our submarines : that of acting as a sort of long-distance escort to merchantmen. Even when a German submarine attacked and torpedoed a merchantman without warning, the commander had to remain on the spot for some time to be sure that the torpedoed ship was actually sinking ; as a rule, he examined the ship's boats, and occasionally took the master prisoner. This took time, and if the merchantman were followed at a distance of five or six miles by one of our own submarines, there was a good chance that the German U-boat would be attacked and torpedoed whilst she was still hovering about the sinking merchantman. As a tactical experiment the plan was interesting ; and if the suggestion had been made when the Admiralty were instituting their convoy

system, it might have led to the larger experiment of using submarines to cover groups of merchantmen steaming in formation. But the plan, as put forward, could never be widely applied, as it was only intended that one submarine should be detached from its ordinary duties to experiment with a Q-ship in the central part of the Channel.

5. The list of measures for attacking U-boats included a large number of unimportant suggestions, which mostly turned upon some new mechanical device : it was suggested *inter alia* that mines should be coloured with a special paint which should make them invisible to aircraft patrols, that indicator nets should be fitted with wireless telegraphy communications, and that decoy ships should be supplied with motor lifeboats carrying torpedoes.

The Admiralty's general view upon these numerous suggestions was that no measure, taken by itself, was likely to turn the campaign in our favour, and that the urgent need of the moment was more anti-submarine material. The depth charge—a bomb which was exploded below the surface by the action of a hydrostatic pistol—was the principal weapon used against submerged U-boats. Large orders for depth charges and the appropriate releasing gear had already been placed with the armament firms, and the Admiralty expected that deliveries during the coming year would be at the rate of about 1,500 depth charges per month. This would make it possible to supply every vessel engaged in submarine hunting with the means of attacking submarines whenever they were met ; and the Admiralty hoped, doubtless, that the added vigour and the greater scope which would thereby be given to our anti-submarine offensive would in the end defeat U-boat operations completely, or at least hamper and cripple them so much that they would cease to be dangerous.

The other measures enumerated in the Admiralty survey of anti-submarine warfare were, as has already been explained, those which were intended to give better protection to merchantmen. (i) A large number merely dealt with the supply of additional material : every effort was being made to supply merchantmen with more guns, more appliances for disguising their movements behind clouds of smoke, and with the protective device against mines known as a paravane. Naval opinion of all grades seems to have been entirely in favour of arming more and more ships with four-inch and six-inch guns. It was not unnatural, perhaps, that a fighting method should be so much favoured ; but the existing statistics were sufficient to show that this method was, in fact, rapidly losing its efficacy. During the campaign of 1915

no merchant ships with a defensive armament had been sunk by German submarines; and, up to August 1916, the number destroyed, though steady, was quite small. In the autumn of the year figures showed that the U-boat commanders were beginning to overcome the difficulties: twelve defensively armed merchantmen were sunk in December 1916, and in January 1917 the number had risen to twenty. It was true that of the merchantmen which escaped nine out of ten did so by virtue of their gunfire; but it was also to be remembered that if the U-boat commanders could overcome twenty armed merchantmen in a month, under conditions of restricted warfare, when once the restrictions were removed and they were free to attack without warning, the number was sure to rise enormously; and this is, in fact, what happened when the time came. So long as our merchant ships were going on their way unescorted and alone, they could never have been saved from the assassin's blow, even by the astonishing courage and skill of the men who manned their guns.

(ii) The Admiralty were also contemplating a complete reorganisation of the barrage across the Straits of Dover. The project of barring the Dover Straits to submarines originated in the early days of the war. For several months before the war began in 1914, the Admiralty's expert advisers had been investigating the question of defence against submarines. The device which the experts had most strongly recommended was a net constructed of light material and suspended from a steel hawser strung along a number of floats. The net was either laid along the bottom or towed by a drifter, and a submarine which fouled it soon revealed its presence by the disturbance it caused to the upper floats. Admiral Hood, who had operated off the Belgian coast in 1914, had pushed forward a plan for maintaining a line of drifters with indicator nets in the Straits of Dover, and by February 1915 thirty drifters were actually employed.<sup>1</sup> In addition to maintaining this semi-mobile net defence, the Admiralty sanctioned a plan for placing a permanent boom across the straits. An enormous amount of material and labour was expended upon this project, which proved a complete failure, and was abandoned shortly after Admiral Bacon took command at Dover. During the winter of 1915 the straits were defended only by the mobile defence forces at Dover, Calais, Boulogne and Dunkirk and by the drifters and their indicator nets. Admiral Bacon was, however, most anxious that the straits should be blocked by some form of permanent barrage. He laid a line of explosive

<sup>1</sup> See Vol. II., p. 271.

nets along the Belgian coast in April 1916.<sup>1</sup> By a curious coincidence, the German Government temporarily abandoned their submarine operations against merchantmen whilst the nets were being laid along the Belgian coast, and this relaxation in the submarine campaign, coinciding as it did with the establishment of the new barrage, misled Admiral Bacon into thinking that it had been very effective. He, therefore, determined to place a similar barrage across the Straits of Dover, from the South Goodwins to the Ruytingen shoal, and in December 1916 a line of indicator mine nets, suspended from buoys 500 yards from each other and marked by light-buoys, ran from the South Goodwins to the West Dyck. The freedom with which the Zeebrugge flotillas had operated in the Channel during the autumn months, and the ease with which the British and German destroyers had crossed the barrage during the raids on the Dover Straits, had shown, however, that the new barrage could not have been a serious obstacle to German submarines. The problem of closing the straits, for which the Admiralty had striven to find a solution since the early days of the war, was, therefore, still unsolved when unrestricted submarine war began; and the Admiralty were giving close attention to the various schemes and projects which were still being placed before them.

(iii) Convoys are mentioned almost at the end of the Admiralty's summary of defensive measures. Their position on the list would suffice to show that they were not regarded as of particular importance; and in any case the remarks which follow show that the Admiralty did not, in fact, contemplate anything beyond convoying the coal trade between France and Great Britain. Indeed, Sir Henry Jackson, when First Sea Lord, had indicated his opinion that any form of ocean convoy was impossible, by committing himself to the statement that "neither the Allies nor the neutrals can actually protect by escort even a small proportion of the sailings." And to this must be added the Naval Staff's objection to any system of ocean escort, on the technical ground that ships under convoy would offer a larger target than single vessels.

It is clear, however, that dicta such as these could not have any finality about them: they were of the nature of appreciations, which correctly indicated the perplexities of the moment. An unparalleled crisis may well demand an effort without precedent; and we have already seen that Admiral Jellicoe himself was fully alive to the danger of the present crisis. Faced with the possible stoppage of our food

<sup>1</sup> See Vol. III., p. 299.

imports and the consequent necessity of accepting the enemy's terms of peace, the Admiralty had no choice but to continue their search for a reply to the U-boats. The actual position must be minutely and unflinchingly re-examined : if the evil should be proved to be indisputably beyond cure by the methods hitherto tried or proposed, then all possible remedies must also be re-examined, and no opinion, no accepted premise, must be regarded as beyond revision.

## 3

*The Problems of Submarine Warfare*

The unique difficulty of the situation and the novelty of the problem involved cannot be fully understood without a close inspection of the actual incidents of the campaign. For this purpose a typical set of movements must be selected ; for to review in full the searches conducted by our destroyers and patrols during this period would be to write an encyclopædia of submarine war. Fortunately it is not difficult to choose a special case out of a large number which closely resemble each other ; and this will show, with sufficient cogency, why our operations against enemy submarines were, up to a certain date, so unsuccessful, and how inevitably a frank realisation of the facts enforced a revolutionary change of methods, even in the teeth of reasoned and generally admitted principles.

On September 3, 1916, between eleven o'clock and noon, the Admiralty learned that a submarine was at work between Beachy Head and Cape d'Antifer. At the time the 3rd Battle Squadron was at Portland with the *Beaver*, *Druid*, *Forester*, *Hind* and *Hornet* of the 1st Destroyer Flotilla, and the *Manly*, *Mansfield*, *Melpomene*, and *Miranda* of the 10th (Harwich) ; the *Lark* and the *Laurel*, of the 9th (Harwich) were at Sheerness. The first step, therefore, was to stop all traffic inside the affected area, and this the Admiralty did early in the afternoon by telegram : "No traffic is to proceed through area between lines drawn south (true) from Dungeness and St. Alban's Head. All vessels bound for, or proceeding through, this area should be detained in port or ordered to the nearest port forthwith." Escorted transports were, however, allowed to sail from Portsmouth ; and later in the day the Admiralty modified their original order by allowing all west-bound traffic to proceed under escort ; the Admiral at Dover was to provide escort as far as Beachy Head ; the Commander-in-Chief at Portsmouth was to arrange for traffic to be convoyed from there to St. Alban's Head.

At a quarter to four in the afternoon a fresh report came in. Torpedo boat No. 5 of the Newhaven detachment had fallen in with the submarine at a quarter-past one and attacked her. At the time, the torpedo boat was on escort duty between Havre and Newhaven, and her captain was just in time to ward off an attack on the s.s. *John Swan*, which he was then escorting. This last report, with those which had come earlier in the day, showed that the German was moving westward.

At twenty-past five the Chief of the War Staff, Vice-Admiral Sir Henry Oliver, began to set the available destroyers in motion. He had previously directed Commodore Tyrwhitt to detach two destroyers to Portsmouth for temporary escort duty. He therefore wired to Harwich telling the Commodore to send them off at once, and gave him the position of the late encounter. At half-past seven the *Lark* and *Laurel* were ordered to proceed down Channel and hunt. Their search was, however, limited by the order to arrive at Portsmouth by 4.0 p.m. on the 4th. They sailed independently, and the *Laurel* reached Portsmouth towards noon, the *Lark* at a quarter-past two. Neither of them sighted anything.

As no further reports had come in by eleven o'clock on the 4th, the Admiralty felt free to re-start traffic, defensively armed vessels and coasters were allowed to proceed to the eastward, whilst, as has been said, all west-bound ships were moving forward under escort. The only vessels still held up were the unarmed, east-bound ships.

September 4 was wild and stormy, and no further reports came in all day. The Admiralty's main preoccupation was to see that the *Princess Victoria*, which lay at Cherbourg with a cargo of French bullion, intended for America, should sail on the following day, and that the *Laurel* and *Lark* should be there to escort her.

At Queenstown Admiral Bayly ordered Q 5 and Q 7 to put to sea. The first was to cruise in the Western Channel from September 5 to 11; the second was to patrol the route between Ushant and Finisterre between September 7 and 18. At about 9.0 p.m. Q 3, which was then at Portland, also sailed.

At twenty minutes past nine on the morning of the 5th, the Admiralty were still without news of any further sinkings, and they approved Admiral de Robeck's request to leave Portland with the 3rd Battle Squadron at six o'clock that evening.<sup>1</sup> As soon as permission was given,

<sup>1</sup> The 3rd Battle Squadron had gone to Portland for gunnery and torpedo exercises on August 24; it was still stationed in the Thames.

fresh reports came in. The first showed that there was now a submarine at work in mid-Channel, due south of St. Alban's Head; the second indicated the presence of a new U-boat on the French side, between Cape Barfleur and Havre. Later messages showed that the one in mid-Channel had moved north-west and had arrived near Portland Bill in the early afternoon. An order was at once sent to Admiral de Robeck telling him to remain in harbour and send out his destroyers to search, whilst Commodore Tyrwhitt was directed to detach four destroyers and a leader to hunt for submarines "towards Portland." Fresh traffic orders were now issued: no vessel was allowed to pass through an area bounded by lines drawn due south from Start Point and Beachy Head. By a later message the usual freedom was given to escorted transports, whilst the *Lark* and *Laurel* were to be detached to reinforce the Newhaven escorts.

Effect was given to these orders as quickly as possible: by six o'clock in the evening the nine destroyers working with the 3rd Battle Squadron had put to sea, and just before 4.30 a.m. on the following day the Commodore ordered the *Lightfoot* and four "L" class destroyers to sea. By noon on September 6, therefore, thirteen destroyers were in the Channel.

The situation was further complicated by the mining of the traffic route in the Bristol Channel on the previous day. The news of this, with the various reports received during the morning and afternoon of the 6th, seemed to show that there were then two submarines in the English Channel making westwards towards Ushant, and a third off the north coast of Cornwall. There was nothing to be done but to let the large searching forces already detached continue their pursuit. Very little more was heard of the submarines for the moment, although it was clear that the one on the French coast was keeping her station in the approaches to Havre. Towards seven o'clock in the evening she was sighted off Cape Barfleur by the destroyer *Spiteful* of the Portsmouth Flotilla, and compelled to dive. No further operation orders were issued, but unescorted traffic was held up all day; later the prohibition was much extended, and all vessels intending to sail from the Clyde, Irish Sea and Bristol Channel for ports south of Ushant were kept in port. The *Lightfoot* and her destroyers assembled off Cape la Hague at five o'clock in the morning of the 7th and then swept westward. The general westerly movement of the submarines was confirmed by the report from the s.s. *Bengali*, of her escape from a submarine on the previous day after a chase which began to the south of the

Eddystone, and by the loss of the *Heathdene* nearly forty miles to the southward of the Lizard.

It now seemed probable that the submarine on the French side had crossed towards England during the night; for, early in the forenoon, St. Catherine's reported a submarine to the southward of the Isle of Wight. She must then have moved westward during the day and afterwards back on her tracks; for late that evening a submarine was reported to the southward of Portland Bill on an easterly course. Three more Q ships (Nos. 4, 8, 10) were sent out from Queenstown during the day, with orders to cruise in the Channel. The destroyers from Portland and Harwich cruised at high speed all day; but sighted nothing.

Early on the 8th a report came in from the Commodore at Falmouth that the armed brig *Helgoland* (Lieutenant A. D. Blair, R.N.R.) had engaged two submarines off the Lizard on the afternoon of the previous day, whilst on passage from Falmouth to Milford Haven, and that, a little earlier, a U-boat had been located to the north-west of Ushant. It thus seemed that, of the submarines which had been attacking shipping for the past three days, one was on her way to the Mediterranean; but that at least one, and possibly two, others were still operating in the Channel itself. Orders were therefore sent to Portland, telling the Vice-Admiral of the 3rd Battle Squadron to keep his destroyers on the search. At 6.0 p.m. the cross-channel service was resumed; but all east- and west-bound traffic was still held up. Late in the evening it was quite certain that there were two submarines in the western channel: one about thirty miles to the south-west of Portland Bill, the other off the Bishop.

During the afternoon, Q 4, which had been sent out from Queenstown on the previous day, got into action with a submarine about fifty miles to the north-westward of Ushant. There was a fierce struggle, in which the Q-ship was worsted. This located a third submarine operating in the Channel and made it doubtful whether one of them was bound for the Mediterranean, as had previously seemed likely. As there was now a reasonable chance that, within a few days, at least two, and possibly three U-boats would be going back through the Straits of Dover, the Admiralty ordered four destroyers from the 4th Flotilla to move down from the Humber and assist in the search. There were now a destroyer leader, seventeen destroyers and six Q-ships engaged in the operation.

Sinkings continued until the 13th, and to the end our searching forces kept picking up the enemy submarines and endeavouring to bring them to action. On the 12th the

*Spitfire*, *Unity* and *Porpoise* sighted a U-boat to the northwest of Ushant, and dropped depth charges over her, though without result. The diversion of destroyers from their proper bases continued long after the raid was over. The *Lightfoot* division, it is true, was recalled to Portsmouth on the 11th to escort the *Repulse* through the Channel; but they returned to the chase on the 14th, and only got back to Harwich on the 20th. The destroyers of the 4th Flotilla did not get back to Immingham until the 27th; those attached to the 3rd Battle Squadron continued their search until the 17th; on the following day they escorted the battleships back to the Swin.

If the warships engaged in defending and attacking commerce during these operations are enumerated in parallel columns, there appears at once a very remarkable inequality in effective force. For seven days, two, or at the most three German submarines had operated within an area which was watched by forty-nine destroyers and forty-eight torpedo boats divided into six local defence flotillas, and by four hundred and sixty-eight armed auxiliaries.<sup>1</sup> During this time they had been actively hunted by thirteen destroyers and seven Q-boats, each one of which had a surface fighting power about double that of any of the submarines. Yet in spite of this immense disparity of numbers the three U-boat commanders had sunk more than thirty British and neutral vessels without suffering any loss themselves. Data of this kind had now for some weeks been under the observation of naval commanders and of the Naval Staff: the lines of thought which they suggested were probably numerous, but there can be little doubt that the more scientific minds must all have been struck with one aspect of the problem. In such cases as the one given, our effort, whether considered as attack or defence, had been not only inadequate, but wholly ineffective. The first consideration must be to determine whether this was

<sup>1</sup> (i) *Auxiliaries*:

The actual figures were: Area number XI (Dover) 238; area number XII (Portsmouth) 81; area number XIII (Portland) 62; area number XIV (Falmouth) 87. Total 468.

(ii) *Local defence flotillas*:

|                      |  | <i>Destroyers.</i> | <i>Torpedo boats.</i> |
|----------------------|--|--------------------|-----------------------|
| Dover . . . . .      |  | 17                 | 3                     |
| Nore . . . . .       |  | 8                  | 13                    |
| Portsmouth . . . . . |  | 12                 | 18                    |
| Devonport . . . . .  |  | 11                 | 6                     |
| Newhaven . . . . .   |  | —                  | 3                     |
| Portland . . . . .   |  | 1                  | 5                     |
|                      |  | <hr/> 49           | <hr/> 48              |

inevitably so—in which case the measures taken must be immediately abandoned—or whether the existing methods could be so improved as to achieve success. The case must be reduced to its simplest terms, so that the question would become one of principle and not of chance or of detail.

If an enemy is reported to have been at a point A at a certain moment, then he must, after any definite space of time, be somewhere within a circle drawn with A as centre and with a radius equal to his speed of movement multiplied by the time which has elapsed since he was observed at A; and if he is to be found and brought to action, the whole of that circle must be effectively covered by the forces opposed to him. It follows that the chances of finding him will vary inversely with the area of the circle to be occupied. Now in practice, as soon as a U-boat began to operate in our waters her presence and her position were known, as a rule, first vaguely by wireless or other information, and then in some detail a day or two later when attacks were reported or when survivors from sunk ships had been landed and questioned. In the typical case above given, reports that enemy submarines were at work were transmitted to the Admiralty from shore stations with great rapidity; but a good deal of time had necessarily to elapse before these reports could be verified and positive orders given to the searching forces. If the signal logs of the destroyers engaged in the search are compared with the reports received at the Admiralty, it will be found that the pursuers could not possibly reach the spot where the submarine was last reported before their information was at least twelve hours old, and it was, in fact, generally much older. They would now be at point A and ready to begin hunting; but if the submarine be allowed an average speed of  $8\frac{1}{2}$  knots, all that they would have to guide them would be the knowledge that she must be somewhere within a circle whose radius was by this time 100 miles, and whose area was therefore over 30,000 square miles. This figure, it is true, holds good only for the open sea: in restricted waters, such as the eastern and central Channel, the area of search would not be quite so large or so symmetrical. But when all allowances have been made, the problem of making a reasonable and successful disposition of forces for such a pursuit remains formidable in the extreme.

Nevertheless it was courageously and energetically attacked. There were evidently two possible ways of lessening the disadvantages under which the counter-attack was working. The first and most important was to obtain and transmit more speedy information of what the enemy was

doing; the second was to mass still larger and better organised forces in the necessarily wide areas where U-boats might at any moment be found. Of the two the more essential was to secure earlier information of an enemy's presence, because this meant lessening his possible radius of movements, and thereby diminishing the area of search. The aim here would be to give to our anti-submarine campaign something of the precision and effectiveness of our operations against the High Seas Fleet. Throughout the war we had generally been able to detect premonitory signs of the movement when the German fleet was about to sail, and it was upon this that the success of our intercepting and countering measures in the North Sea had mainly depended. Experience showed that where this very early knowledge of the enemy's intention failed, his force was either not met at all, or was met in circumstances so different from those anticipated that the outcome was largely a matter of chance. In other words, it was the time factor that was our difficulty. The ease with which the Germans had passed their raiders into the Atlantic in spite of Admiral Jellicoe's intercepting dispositions, the freedom with which they could raid the Straits of Dover in the teeth of a more numerous and more daring flotilla, showed how uncertain and even fruitless operations were likely to be whenever the Admiralty or a local commander was obliged to act merely upon reports of what the enemy had been doing; and our operations against the German submarines were now adding an extreme example of tactics based necessarily on guesswork, and not upon any kind of certain knowledge. But it was not easy to see any line of progress on this side. It was not our intelligence system that was at fault: it could show that U-boats were at sea; at times it showed exactly where they had been operating at a particular moment; but further than this it could not go. The time handicap could perhaps be reduced, and there was the possibility that scientific invention might succeed in providing us with a new detective method. Men of science believed that apparatus could be devised which would reveal a submarine's presence in a given area to ships at a considerable distance. If their hopes were justified and if they could perfect the apparatus before it was too late, officers in command of anti-submarine forces would be in a less hopeless position on arriving at their point of search: they would have ears as well as eyes, and would no longer be ploughing a vast expanse of sea in the hope of sighting an invisible enemy who was possibly just beneath them and possibly a hundred miles away.

The second question, that of a method of massing more and more forces in the areas where submarines were known to be operating, was one which must affect the whole of our existing system of defence. When the Commander-in-Chief had called for opinions upon the conduct of the submarine campaign from all the officers in the Grand Fleet, Admiral Beatty had sent in a far-sighted paper upon this subject. "The call for suggestions," he wrote, "will doubtless produce some suggestions and devices of value . . . but the measure of their success will depend upon how they are used. . . ." Statistics showed first that the submarines were located about sixteen times as often as they were engaged; and, secondly, that after searches had been ordered, the number of vessels actually employed never amounted to more than one in five of those available on each occasion.<sup>1</sup> Figures like these amounted to proof positive that the existing system, which consisted "in the employment of a number of localised forces, each employed on purely defensive duties, in a prescribed area, each under a different chief, each working on different lines," was inherently vicious. The proper remedy was to put one single officer in control of all anti-submarine operations; to give him sole charge of all the forces employed in anti-submarine warfare, and so enable him to mass them in overwhelming numbers at the threatened points. As we have already seen, this suggestion was unanimously adopted by the conference at the Admiralty and was carried out by the appointment of Admiral Duff.

<sup>1</sup> His figures were:

|  | September. | October. |
|--|------------|----------|
| Ships sunk                                   | 61         | 45       |
| Occasions when enemy submarines were located | 138        | 161      |
| by us  | 8          | 10       |

He added the following figures, covering the same period, to show the results of the localised defence system.

|  | Two areas where<br>submarines are<br>busy. | Eight areas<br>where submarines<br>are not busy. |
|--|--|--|
| Ships sunk                               | 46   | 3  |
| located                                  | 101  | 10   |
| Total craft available for offensive work | 89   | 348  |

*The German Estimate of British Endurance at Sea*

When Admiral Duff took charge of the Anti-Submarine Division the traffic round the British Isles was controlled by a set of orders of which the general principle was that vessels should be kept inside the coastal zone as much as possible.

Admiralty control over merchant shipping was, however, more rigorously exercised over outgoing than over incoming traffic, as ships leaving ports in the United Kingdom could be given more detailed instructions than vessels sailing from distant foreign ports. When a vessel was sailing from Great Britain, the local shipping control officers knew from the Admiralty where submarines were operating, and could, in consequence, issue orders and route instructions which might carry her clear of the danger. The case of an incoming vessel was absolutely different. The situation in Home Waters changed from day to day, and an approach route which was tolerably safe when a vessel left America might be highly dangerous when she approached the British Isles. For this reason, the incoming traffic was at once more vulnerable and less easy to protect than the outgoing stream of ships. As far as practicable, Atlantic shipping bound for the Channel was made to approach the European coast to the south of Ushant, then to cross over to the coast of Cornwall and to keep along the inshore route. Ships bound to the Irish Sea and the Clyde made the Irish coast near the Skelligs and then hugged the south coast of Ireland. Vessels bound to the Bristol Channel also kept to the south coast of Ireland as far as the Tuskar, after which they crossed to the Welsh coast and made for their destination. Traffic leaving the British Isles was distributed over four principal routes : one ran from Land's End past Ushant to the southward; another went due west from the Scillies; a third went along the south coast of Ireland to the Skelligs and thence westward; the fourth went through Rathlin Sound to Tory Island on the north coast of Ireland and then due west. The traffic bound to the Skelligs was passed along the Bristol Channel and the Welsh coast and thence to the Tuskar. The system was elaborated by a large number of alternative tracks to the four main routes, and of connecting tracks along which shipping might be diverted from one of the main arteries to another. The general effect of this system of control was to concentrate a very great number of ingoing and outgoing

ships on the patrolled routes off the south coast of Ireland and in the Bristol Channel.

Admiral Duff decided to work upon the existing lines, and he gave his views upon the future of the campaign in a minute upon one of the numerous suggestions which the Admiralty were then considering. "From Dover to Land's End we are forced to rely mainly upon trawler protection . . . ; and the use of a single trade route as close to the salient points along the coast as circumstances will admit, will, I believe, allow of such a patrol being made effective as trawlers become available. . . . it may reasonably be hoped that, with a carefully distributed trawler patrol backed and strengthened at intervals by the fastest and best armed yachts available, some 'P' craft and destroyers, together with an organised system of seaplane scouting, enemy submarines will find attack on the surface too risky a business to be ventured upon." Admiral Duff was, however, quite clear that the problem of submarine attack at the entrance to the Channel still had to be dealt with; for the minute continued, "A far more important route, and one for which an efficient patrol must be provided before the spring, is that from the Lizard to Ushant."

The Admiralty's first measure was an attempt to bring all Channel traffic on to one continually patrolled track running as close inshore as possible from the Scilly Islands to the mouth of the Thames. They expected that the effect upon the enemy would be to make him "turn his attention to a determined attack on the patrol service, as in mid-channel there will be no shipping other than sailing vessels for him to attack, and lay mines indiscriminately along the route and on a larger scale at the salient points." These dangers would be met by keeping the larger trawlers, fitted with wireless installations, patrolling off the points where minelaying was most likely to occur, and by creating a separate minesweeping organisation to deal with every obstruction as soon as it was reported. The project was sent to most of the senior naval officers on the south coast, and they all pronounced favourably upon it. This measure with regard to the traffic in the Channel was, in fact, one of the principal items in our plan of campaign when unrestricted submarine warfare began.

A further measure, and one to which the Commander-in-Chief attached great importance, was the mining of the Heligoland Bight. Early in January he urged the Admiralty to lay a complete semicircle of shallow and deep mines round the bight from the Rote Kliff bank to Ameland. The barrage,

he suggested, should be watched "by light cruiser and destroyer sweeps at varying intervals with submarine patrols." This very ambitious programme was impossible: to give effect to it 54,000 mines and 1,000 ground mines would have been required, and the Admiralty had not anything like that number available. The plan finally adopted was that of laying independent minefields along the semicircle between Ameland and the Schleswig coast. The initial results were not promising. Three minefields were laid during the first part of the month: one off Borkum, the two others to the west-north-westward of Heligoland. On the night of January 25, the minelayers *Princess Margaret* and *Wahine* mined a very large area in the central part of the Bight, some seventy miles to the west-north-west of Heligoland; simultaneously, submarine *E 45* mined the northern exit from the Bight, near Lister Deep. On the last night of the month, the *Abdiel* laid another field to the north-north-west of *E 45's*, in a position about fifteen miles to the south of the Horn Reefs. These fields accounted for some half-dozen enemy trawlers; they did not cause the loss of a single outgoing or incoming submarine, and were always discovered after fairly short intervals.

The plan of using submarines against submarines was deemed to be most practicable in the enclosed waters of the Flanders Bight. During the last months of the year, the enemy's minelaying campaign had grown in intensity, and Harwich, which was just opposite the enemy's base at Zeebrugge, was particularly menaced. At the end of January 1917, therefore, the Admiralty decided to form a special submarine patrol of eight "C" boats at Harwich, to "intercept the enemy minelayers from Zeebrugge." In addition to this, the Commander-in-Chief redistributed the submarines under his immediate orders so as to maintain a continuous patrol between the Long Forties and the Skagerrak, right across the tracks of the outgoing and incoming U-boats.

In the last week of January, just on the eve of the German declaration, an Allied naval conference assembled in Whitehall. "I think it highly essential that we should meet," said the British Premier in his opening address, "and meet at the earliest possible opportunity, to discuss certain matters, for undoubtedly the situation is grave, and is becoming increasingly so. We have had complete command of the sea for two years and a half, in spite of all the efforts of the German navy; but there is no doubt that the challenge to the Allies' supremacy is becoming more serious month by month and week by week. The Germans have discovered

what a formidable weapon the submarine is from the point of view of destroying the shipping of the Allied and neutral countries, and the tonnage which is being sunk month by month is alarmingly great, and I am afraid it is going to be increased." No terms of reference could be clearer than this; and indeed the discussions of the next two days (January 23 and 24) were entirely focussed upon the submarine campaign and its implications.

After long discussion it was decided that all British battleships in the Mediterranean, with the exception of the *Lord Nelson* and the *Agamemnon*, should be called home to provide crews for the destroyers and light cruisers which would be completed during the year. The French delegates undertook to keep a battle squadron permanently stationed at Corfu to compensate the Italians for the loss of the old battleships of the "Queen" class, which were stationed at Taranto. This was, perhaps, the most drastic and far-reaching decision taken; all other resolutions seem merely to have modified the existing system of trade defence in the Mediterranean in points of detail. The zones of control were again altered slightly, and after an exchange of views between the French and British staffs, it was agreed that traffic should be concentrated on the coastal routes in the western basin of the Mediterranean, and that, in the eastern, a combination of the French and British systems should be adopted. Traffic to and from Salonica and the Ægean was to be ordered to proceed along fixed routes, changed frequently; British and Allied traffic between Cape Bon and Port Said was to be dispersed according to the British system. As the losses in the western approaches to the English Channel had been severe during the month, the British Admiralty promised the French a reinforcement of twelve trawlers for the Ushant patrol.<sup>1</sup> These were the last decisions taken before the German declaration of unrestricted submarine war.

The German Government issued their declaration on January 31, and it took effect on the following day. It has already been shown that the mistake of those who made it was that they limited their range of vision to what they called "purely military considerations." This was, of course, a limitation forced upon them by what, in their view, was now a desperate position. They refused to take account of the moral and political implications of their decision, because they saw a possible chance of victory in one direction

<sup>1</sup> The other resolutions of the conference were concerned with shipping, supplies of raw materials, etc.

and no hope of it in the other. For them moral results were negligible, and political results could only be felt after a certain time, and then only in a certain degree. Tonnage destruction, U-boat building programmes and the statistics of British seaborne trade were the only data upon which the naval and military commands could now base decision. Their decision was wrong, because it was the product of reasoning in which the essential premises had been misstated or deliberately ruled out; but it resulted necessarily from a logic which to the German military leaders seemed flawless, and no one can fairly judge their error without first realising the effect upon minds such as theirs of Holtzendorff's memorandum upon the certain success of the campaign, and then comparing the results actually obtained with the figures promised. If Holtzendorff was risking defeat, so were we; if we were capable of a supreme effort, so were our enemies. On these two points Holtzendorff was not so far wrong. His calculation ran thus: statistics showed that about  $6\frac{3}{4}$  million tons of British and 3 million tons of neutral shipping had entered and cleared from British harbours during the year 1916, and Great Britain was known to have some 900,000 tons of captured enemy shipping at its disposal. England was, therefore, fed and supplied by about  $10\frac{3}{4}$  million tons of British and neutral shipping. The German U-boats, working without restrictions and torpedoing at sight, could be counted upon to destroy 600,000 tons of shipping a month, and at least two-fifths of the neutral shipping engaged in carrying supplies to Britain would be frightened away from the service.

At the end of five months, therefore, Great Britain would lose 39 per cent. of the tonnage employed in carrying her essential supplies, and the loss would be final and irreplaceable. This, in itself, would be more than the country could bear, and the loss of tonnage from U-boat sinkings might be aggravated by subsidiary losses from special causes. A failure of the American and Canadian harvests, for instance, would drive at least 750,000 tons of shipping to the Australian route; the laying up of neutral shipping would partially close the Scandinavian routes to England, and severely restrict British supplies of margarine and fats. And the shortage of foodstuffs could not, he argued, be combated by a rationing system, because there were not enough officials in England to enforce it. After much more reasoning and marshalling of figures, Admiral von Holtzendorff ended his memorandum thus: "I arrive, therefore, at the conclusion that an unrestricted U-boat war, started at the proper time,

will bring about peace before the harvesting period of the 1917 summer, that is, before August 1; the break with America must be accepted; we have no choice but to do so. In spite of the danger of a breach with America, unrestricted submarine war, started soon, is the proper, and indeed the only way to end the war with victory."

The faulty bases upon which the Admiral had built up his structure of argument, his wrong premises and wrong deductions, were mercilessly exposed, months later, by Erzberger. We may pass from them to make a brief survey of the known, admitted facts of submarine warfare; for it was upon their knowledge of those facts that Holtzendorff, Scheer and Ludendorff had founded their confidence in final victory.

## 5

*The Achievements of Submarine Warfare, 1914-1917*

In February 1917 the German Government had 111 boats available for active operations, of which forty-nine were based on the North Sea ports, thirty-three on Zeebrugge and Ostend, twenty-four on Pola in the Adriatic, two on Constantinople, and three in the Baltic.<sup>1</sup> Of this total, about a third (thirty-five to forty) were at work at any particular moment. The building programme of the German Admiralty had suffered from the political uncertainties with which this campaign was surrounded. From September 1915 to May 1916 only mining submarines of the smaller type had been laid down; but in May the naval authorities appear to have decided upon a programme of intensive construction. Thirty-four submarines of the larger type (800 to 1,500 tons) were then put on order; and in February 1917, when the decision to wage unrestricted war was taken, a new and very comprehensive programme was settled in collaboration with the magnates of the shipbuilding industry. The German Government had every reason to suppose that deliveries would be far in excess of losses; for the British naval forces had only been destroying from one to two submarines a month during the previous year.

Since the beginning of the war the achievements of the German submarines had certainly not been such as to discourage hopes of their ultimate success. Since August 1914 they had destroyed twenty-four warships and armed auxiliaries, and they had compelled wide changes in the existing rules of naval tactics. The Grand Fleet could only put to

<sup>1</sup> Michelsen, *Der U-bootskrieg 1914-1918*, p. 183.

sea with an escort of nearly one hundred destroyers, no capital ship could leave its base without an escort of small craft, and the German U-boats had hampered our squadrons to an extent which the most expert and far-sighted naval officer had never foreseen. After the operation of August 19 Admiral Jellicoe had decided that it was not safe for his enormous fleet of super-Dreadnoughts—each one of which could steam for several thousands of miles without refuelling—to undertake prolonged operations to the south of the Dogger Bank. The Admiralty, with the full facts before them, had agreed that the Grand Fleet ought not to enter the southern end of the North Sea, unless the German command should commit the High Seas Fleet to some new kind of operation wholly different in scope and character from those upon which they had hitherto ventured. Even with this vital reservation they were accepting a certain limitation of our control of the sea, and this was due solely to the U-boats and their captains. Had Admiral Jellicoe been confronted only by Admiral Scheer and his battle squadrons, it is inconceivable that he should ever have deemed any part of the North Sea a danger area into which he could only penetrate in quite exceptional circumstances.

This novel success of the German submarine must be judged as much by their incidental as by their direct influence upon naval warfare. Amongst these casual effects, their power to force unwieldy and disproportionate concentrations of ships may be counted the most extraordinary. If what may be called the routine operations of naval war were put into lists and classified, it would be found that, just as the operations which began in the Channel on September 6 compelled us to use some thirteen vessels to hunt for two or at the most three submarines, so week by week and month by month we were continually driven to the same absorbing detachment of force.

Another striking proof of the effectiveness of the U-boats was the enormous mass of military forces which they had compelled us to divert wholly or partially from other purposes to the anti-submarine campaign. In February 1917 about two-thirds of our destroyer strength, and all our submarines, minesweepers and auxiliaries, were engaged in some branch of submarine warfare. The statement must be reduced to figures and statistics before its significance can be fully grasped. In Home waters and the Mediterranean about three thousand destroyers and auxiliary patrol vessels were engaged in combating the submarine menace, either directly or indirectly; so that every German submarine was diverting

some twenty-seven craft and their crews from other duties by pinning them to patrol areas and forcing them to spend their time in screening, searching and hunting operations which very rarely ended in success. In spite of its enormous numbers, the Auxiliary Patrol had only accounted for seven enemy submarines since January 1916. During the year there had been about one hundred engagements between the U-boats and the British auxiliary forces; so that when an encounter took place, the U-boat captain's chances of escaping were about fourteen to one. One of these fights suggested that the chances would be even better as time went on. Late in the afternoon of July 11 three trawlers, *Onward*, *Era* and *Nellie Nutten*, were patrolling together about one hundred and twenty miles east of Girdleness, when they sighted a submarine and chased her. They had hardly opened fire before three other submarines appeared. The fight went completely against the trawlers, and all three were sunk or disabled. The action showed that patrol boats with three-pounders could no longer hope to defeat well-armed and controlled German submarines, and a large plan of re-arming the trawlers was set on foot. It was, however, quite evident that any measures we took could be little more than palliatives. It was beyond our power to provide our auxiliary craft with an armament which would put each one of them on an equality with the latest German submarine; and that, after all, would have been the only remedy.

The engagement had, indeed, emphasised one of the most serious aspects of this new form of warfare: improvements were sure to be made in the construction and armament of U-boats which might at any moment render a great part of our anti-submarine material obsolete and useless. Not only our trawlers, but the minefields and obstructions upon which we were so largely depending might be found one day to have become suddenly ineffectual.

Seldom during the war had we been so forcibly reminded of the limitations which the German submarine fleet imposed upon our squadrons as we were in the autumn of the year 1916. In October the Danish Government, fearing that the Germans might seek to compensate themselves for the pressure of the blockade by invading Jutland and carrying off the cattle and the agricultural stocks, had been giving serious attention to their defence problems; and the British Government had ordered the Admiralty and the General Staff to see what assistance could be given to the Danes in a crisis. In their joint staff appreciation the Government's

naval and military advisers had said, that for naval reasons it would be almost impossible to support the Danes at all. "The route to be followed by transports proceeding to Denmark," ran the staff appreciation, "passes within 200 miles of the German principal naval base, from which the German fleet can emerge at full strength at any time it may select. The British fleet would have to be kept constantly at sea to protect the line of communications, and at a strength superior to that of the whole German navy. The enemy may be expected to make full use of his submarines—of which he can always keep twenty in the North Sea to attack our covering fleet and transports; and we should incur heavy losses from submarine attack without necessarily being given any opportunity of making a corresponding attack upon the enemy. . . ." Seeing that the British fleet had held together the most inaccessible states of the coalition against the Directory and the Empire, and that during the long peace of the Victorian era it had sufficed to keep distant countries within the British sphere of influence in politics, the conclusion of the joint staff conference was a striking illustration of the contrast between past and present, and there can be no doubt that the submarine was practically the sole cause of the difference. In the Peninsular War the line of communications between Great Britain and Spain ran closer to Brest than the line between Great Britain and Denmark did to Kiel and Wilhelmshaven.

The results of the last eight months of submarine warfare must, however, have seemed highly promising to the German military leaders. Since the *Sussex* crisis the submarine commanders had been operating against shipping under considerable restrictions. Their official apologist, Captain Michelsen, speaks of it as a dead period; but, in point of fact, it was an extremely important one. Admiral von Holtzendorff overcame Admiral Scheer's opposition to compromise, and resumed restricted submarine warfare at some time in the early autumn of 1916, and before the year was out the U-boats were causing us very considerable losses. The actual events of this phase in the submarine campaign must be reviewed, for they are definitely connected with the decision to wage unrestricted warfare. The total destruction of shipping had risen steadily: in June 1916 the losses, British and foreign, were 108,885 tons, and in January 1917 368,521 tons; and these results had been obtained by intensifying the warfare in the English Channel and the western approaches to the British Isles.<sup>1</sup> Here they had operated

<sup>1</sup> See Fayle, *Seaborne Trade*, Vol. III., p. 465.

with considerable immunity from attack.<sup>1</sup> The success of the campaign in the Channel and to the west of it was, however, very marked and highly important; for it was there that shipping was at its greatest concentration. For several months the German submarine commanders had established and maintained themselves there, and had inflicted heavy losses upon British and French shipping, without torpedoing them at sight. The German Naval Staff therefore had this strong argument in favour of unrestricted warfare: If the submarines could sink 350,000 tons a month, working under restrictions, was it not reasonable to suppose that when freed from restrictions they would succeed in bringing the rate up to 600,000 a month—a rate which would certainly be fatal to Great Britain? Admiral von Holtzendorff's calculation of victory was simply an elaboration of this statement of probable chances. The autumn campaign proved, moreover, that the obstructions in the Straits of Dover, from which we had hoped so much, were not effectively stopping the submarines of the Flanders flotilla. All the sinkings in the eastern, and a considerable part of those in the western part of the Channel were done by the UB and UC boats from Zeebrugge. In October some 70,000 tons of shipping were lost in the Channel, and though the rate fell slightly in the next two months, it was well above 50,000 tons a month during the last quarter of the year. The increase of submarine minelaying, which was practically always carried out from Flanders, told the same story. The curve representing vessels sunk by mines rose throughout the autumn of the year, until in October it stood at the high mark of 37,525 tons.

The order to wage unrestricted submarine warfare was, moreover, given at a time when the overseas commitments of the western Allies were very high. Great Britain and France were then maintaining 770,000 men in Salonica, Egypt and in East Africa. All these forces were being supplied along routes which passed through the area of German submarine operations, and the drafts and reinforcements of our colonial troops in France were carried through

<sup>1</sup> The actions between U-boats and British and French patrol craft in the Channel area were as follows:—

September.—Three actions: two off the Lizard, one off Start Point.

October.—Seven actions: two off the Lizard, two off S. and W. coasts of Ireland; three in the Channel.

November.—Three actions: all in the Channel.

December.—Eight actions: four in the triangle Lizard-Ushant, the Scillies; two between the Casquets and Portland; one in the Bristol Channel; one in St. George's Channel.

the Bay of Biscay and the Western Channel. The diversion of commercial tonnage to purely military services was already making a serious freight shortage; if the military shipping could be seriously attacked and damaged, the enemy's chances of crippling one of our overseas expeditions were, at least, hopeful. The Germans had, moreover, reason to believe that the U-boat's method of attack had definitely outstripped all means of defence against it. To fight the submarine danger we were using depth charges, mined nets, deep minefields, hunting patrols of destroyers and P. boats, fixed and floating obstructions, armed ships disguised as merchantmen, and special patrols of submarines—all the coastal routes along which merchant ships had to pass were patrolled by large numbers of trawlers and drifters. Yet the list of losses inflicted during the previous year of war proved that all our measures taken together were not adequately meeting the danger, and that no one weapon or method of attack had yet shown exceptional promise.

On the other side of the account, the Germans had lost twenty-five boats during the year; but this rate of destruction was quite insufficient even to check the campaign. Moreover, of these twenty-five, five had been sunk by accident or ordinary shipwreck and four more had been destroyed either by Russian minefields in the Black Sea or by Russian destroyers and drifters.<sup>1</sup> The British navy, therefore, could only reckon on destroying with their existing methods some eighteen to twenty U-boats a year, or between three and four every two months. The counter-attack, in short, was not yet sufficiently developed to affect the progress of the campaign.

<sup>1</sup> The actual figures, compiled from Admiralty returns and the tables given in Andreas Michelsen's *U-bootskrieg*, are as follows:

| Accident and<br>unknown causes. | Destroyers and<br>auxiliary patrols.               | Q.<br>boats. | Sub-<br>marines. | Mine-<br>fields. |
|---------------------------------|--|--------------|------------------|------------------|
| UC 12                           | UB 26 (bombs).                                     | U 68         | U 51             | U 10             |
| UB 7                            | UB 3 (mine net).                                   | UB 19        | UC 10            | UB 46            |
| U 20                            | UB 3 (bombs).                                      |              |                  | UB 45            |
| UB 15                           | U 74 (gunfire).                                    |              |                  | UC 15            |
| UC 5                            | UB 44 (nets and bombs).<br>U 56                    |              |                  |                  |
|                                 | UC 13 } Russian destroyers<br>UC 19 } and patrols. |              |                  |                  |
|                                 | UB 29  |              |                  |                  |
|                                 | UB 13 (indicator nets and<br>bombs).               |              |                  |                  |
|                                 | U 77 (gunfire).                                    |              |                  |                  |
|                                 | • UC 7 (depth charge from<br>motor boat).          |              |                  |                  |

*Unrestricted Submarine Warfare begins—Attacks on the Dover Straits*

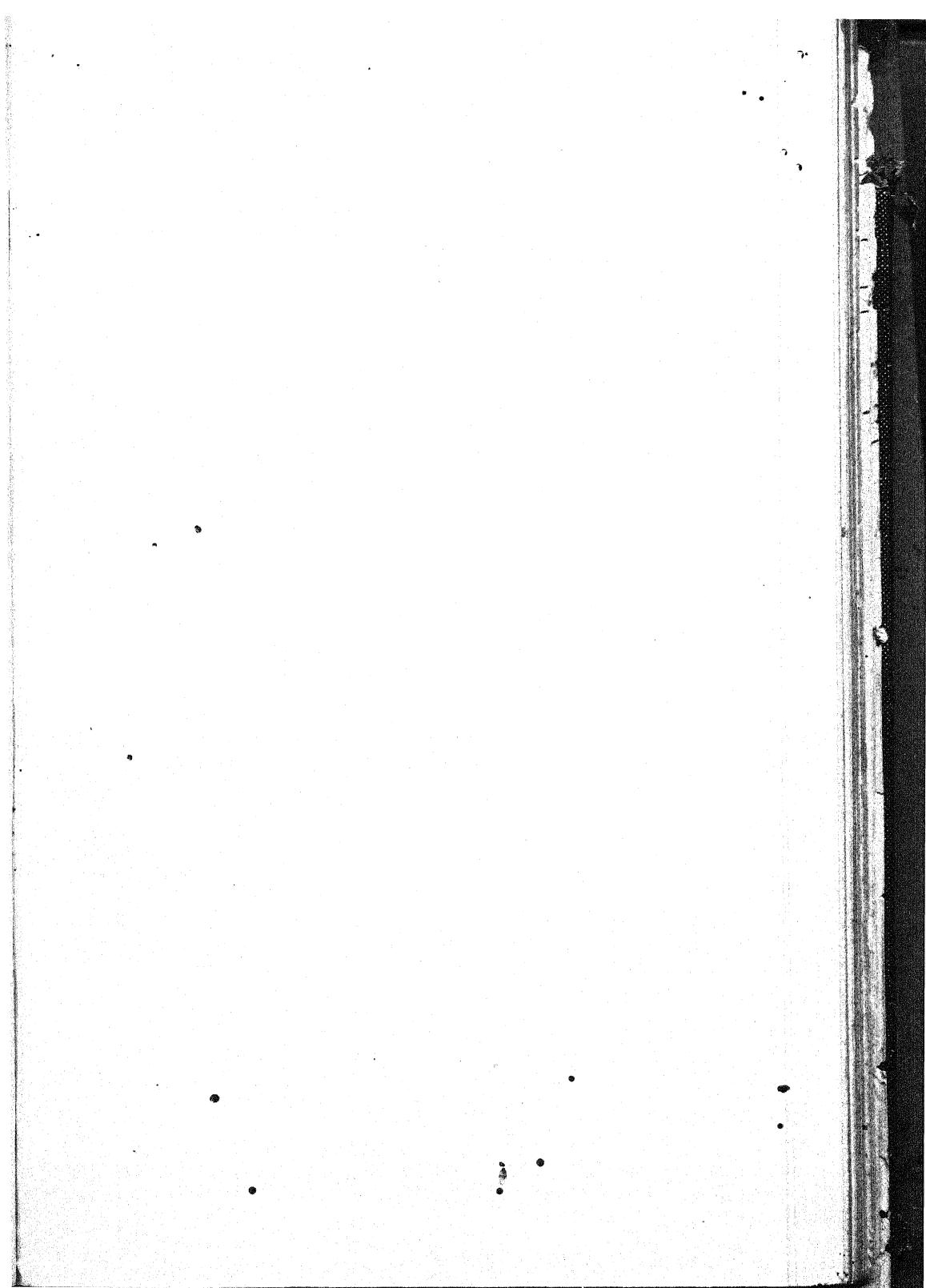
From the German point of view the unrestricted submarine war opened most successfully. In the first week of February thirty-five vessels, British and foreign, were sunk in the Channel and the western approaches.<sup>1</sup> The Admiralty reinforced Queenstown with four Grand Fleet destroyers<sup>2</sup> and the 10th Sloop Flotilla<sup>3</sup> from the Humber. The destroyers were soon absorbed in escorting ships to the protected coastal route, and Admiral Bayly was left, as before, with only his Q-boats to operate against submarines. There could be no thought for the moment of detaching more destroyers and small craft to the western area. At a conference held at Rosyth on February 15 the Commander-in-Chief urged strongly that a further depletion of his flotillas would be most dangerous. Admiral Beatty was, indeed, most anxious lest the Admiralty should be tempted into diverting a proportion of the light squadrons of the Grand Fleet for special operations in the southern part of the North Sea. The First Lord, Sir Edward Carson, seems to have agreed, and the Admiralty pressed on their policy of concentrating traffic round the British Isles on the patrolled coastal routes. At a conference held at the Admiralty on February 19 it was decided that the war channel which had been established in the early days of the war between the Thames and the Humber should be extended to the Tyne. Measures were also taken to improve the buoying of the channel and to keep merchant traffic to it more rigidly.

Towards the end of the month the Germans decided to attempt a fresh attack on the Dover Straits from Zeebrugge. The forces under Admiral Bacon's command had been considerably increased since the first raid in October, and the method of disposing and employing them had been modified. On the night of February 25 two light cruisers, two flotilla leaders, twelve "L," four "H" and one "I" class destroyers, the *Viking* and two monitors were stationed on the Dover side of the straits. Admiral Bacon had, in addition, a number

<sup>1</sup> See Map 11.

<sup>2</sup> *Magic* 34 knots, 1,042 tons, 11th Flotilla.  
*Peyton*      "      1,021      "      14th Flotilla.  
*Parthian*      "      1,025      "      15th Flotilla.  
*Narwhal*      "      1,032      "      12th Flotilla.

<sup>3</sup> 10th Sloop Flotilla, under orders of Admiral of Minesweepers:—  
*Alyssum*      *Gladiolus*      *Poppy*      } "Azalea" class, 17 knots,  
*Buttercup*      *Mignonette*      *Rosemary*      } 1,250 tons, two 4-inch guns.





of old destroyers and patrol boats, which were employed in escort duties and traffic control, and could not therefore be treated as part of his striking force. The light cruisers *Conquest* and *Active*, with the destroyers *Porpoise*, *Paragon*, *Unity* and *Ambuscade*, were anchored off Deal, in the Downs, which were guarded, at their northern and southern entrances, by the monitors *Erebus* and *Terror* respectively. The flotilla leaders *Broke* and *Faulknor* and nine destroyers were at Dover, and five "L" class destroyers—the *Lance*, *Landrail*, *Lochinvar*, *Laverock* and *Laurel*—were patrolling in the straits. The method of patrol had been considerably modified: the barrage was now marked by five large light-buoys (Nos. 5A, 7A, 9A, 11A and 13A), and a destroyer was stationed off each with orders to keep on a patrol line running five miles south-west from each light-buoy.<sup>1</sup>

The German plan of attack differed on this occasion from previous ones, in that the forces allotted to its execution were very much dispersed. The traffic route between England and the Hook, the Downs anchorage, and the outpost forces on the Channel barrage, were all to be attacked during the night. The second "Z" or Zeebrugge Half Flotilla was to operate in the first zone near the Maas lightship; the first "Z" Half Flotilla—*G 95*, *G 96*, *V 67*, *V 68* and *V 47*—under Commander Konrad Albrecht, was to operate against the Downs, whilst the 6th Flotilla—*S 49* (leader), *V 46*, *V 45*, *G 37*, *V 44* and *G 86*—under Commander Tillessen, were to attack the barrage. These detachments left harbour between six and seven o'clock on February 25th.

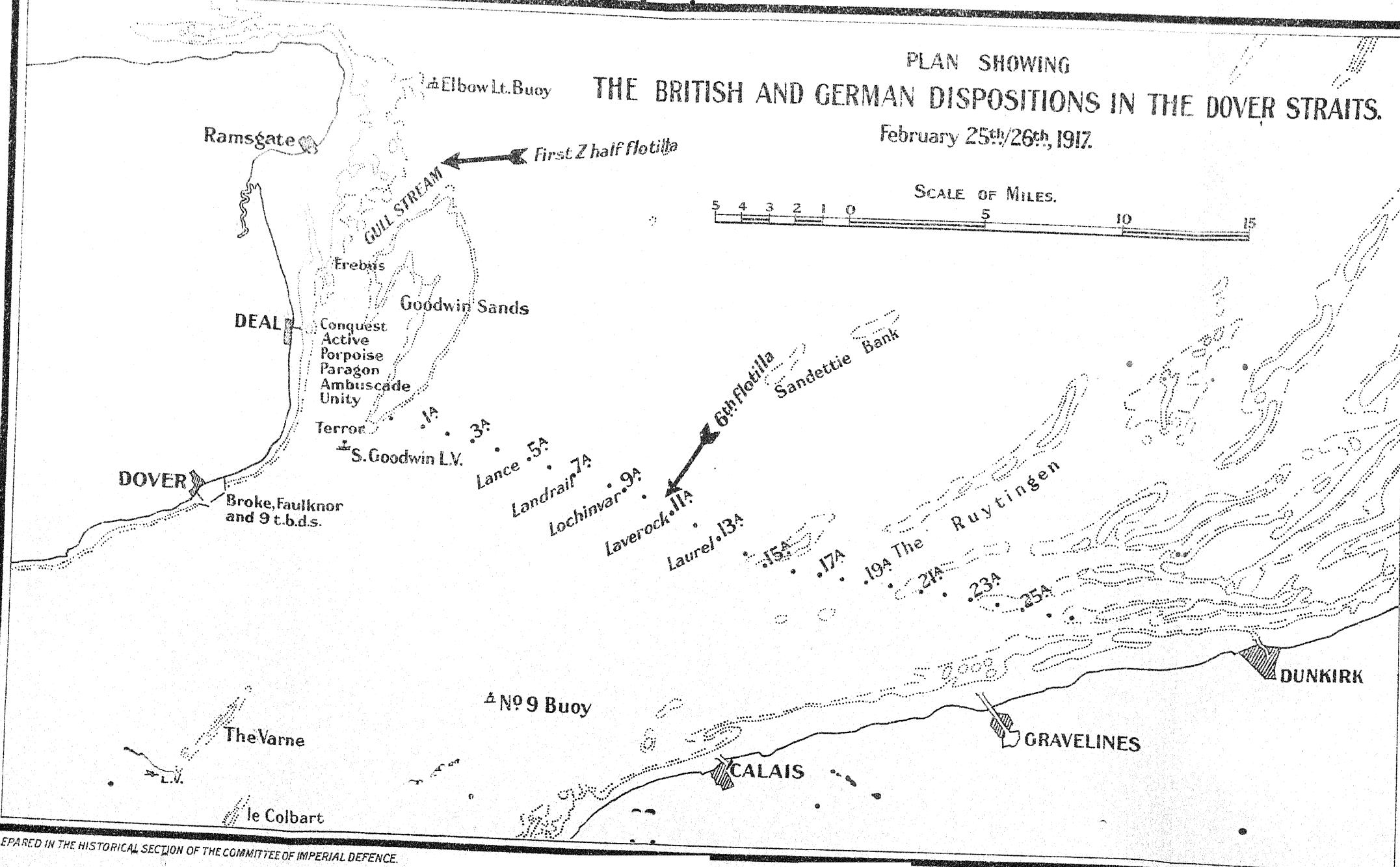
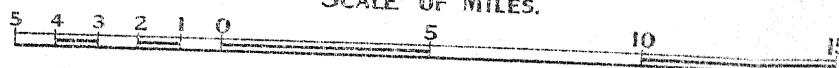
The weather was fine but overcast; the moon, which was four days old, was hidden by clouds, and the night was, in consequence, very dark. At half-past ten the Captain of the *Laverock*, which was then about three and a half miles to the south-west of 11A buoy on a north-easterly course, sighted a destroyer on his port bow, steering south-west. A moment or so later she burned a red flare; she was evidently the leading destroyer of Commander Tillessen's flotilla, which had just crossed the central part of the barrage. The Germans had detected the British destroyer a few moments earlier, and withheld their fire until they were very near. They opened upon the *Laverock* at close range, and smothered her with shell; but Lieutenant Binmore, who was quite determined to

<sup>1</sup> The Germans appear to have numbered these buoys 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 respectively. The British dispositions on the night of February 25 were: the *Lance* patrolling from 5A buoy; the *Landrail* patrolling from 7A buoy; the *Lochinvar* patrolling from 9A buoy; the *Laverock* patrolling from 11A buoy; the *Laurel* patrolling from 13A buoy.

PLAN SHOWING  
THE BRITISH AND GERMAN DISPOSITIONS IN THE DOVER STRAITS.

February 25<sup>th</sup>/26<sup>th</sup>, 1917.

SCALE OF MILES.



PREPARED IN THE HISTORICAL SECTION OF THE COMMITTEE OF IMPERIAL DEFENCE.

Ordnance Survey 1928

maintain contact, put his helm over, passed through the rear of the German line and steadied upon the same course as the Germans. The consequences of this manœuvre are an extraordinary illustration of the hazards and uncertainties of a night action. Commander Tillessen was satisfied that he had passed the *Laverock* on an opposite course. When he sighted her again on his starboard quarter, and on the same southerly course as himself, she seemed to him to be not one destroyer but three, and he was convinced that he was now in action with a whole detachment. The fire from the *Laverock*'s guns must have been extraordinarily rapid and well sustained, for Commander Tillessen never discovered his mistake, and turned to a northerly course at about 10.40. Lieutenant Binmore saw the enemy turn and made after them; but his impressions and those of his opponent were quite different. It seemed to Commander Tillessen that the German flotilla was following a detachment of British destroyers, which was altering course gradually towards the French shore: Lieutenant Binmore was quite certain that he was following the German flotilla. The two forces lost contact a few minutes before eleven and Commander Tillessen re-crossed the barrage at about eleven o'clock. He intercepted a signal from the *Laverock*, reporting the engagement, and upon this decided that a surprise attack upon Dover—which he had originally intended to deliver—was no longer practicable, and he held straight on for his base. The other British destroyers kept to their patrol stations. Admiral Bacon at Dover got news of the *Laverock*'s encounter at about eleven o'clock, and at once ordered out the destroyers in harbour. Before they could get to sea, however, the German force under Commander Konrad Albrecht had struck at the second point of attack, the Downs anchorage.

A line of armed drifters was spread every night across the northern entrance to the Downs from the North Foreland to the North Goodwin light-vessel. At eleven o'clock the *John Lincoln*, at the inshore end of this line, near the North Foreland, sighted a line of destroyers, about a mile to seaward of her, on a northerly course. She watched them and sent up an alarm rocket when they opened fire a few minutes later. The German destroyers sent down a number of shells in the fields near the wireless station at the North Foreland and then bombarded Margate and Westgate for a few minutes. By twenty minutes past eleven they had fired their last rounds and were making off to the north-eastward. As soon as the commanding officer of the *Porpoise* division saw the green rocket and sighted the firing he ordered his division

to weigh. The light cruisers and destroyers passed the Gull at about 11.17 and were off the Elbow light-buoy at twenty minutes to twelve. They sighted nothing; but they must, at times, have been quite near to a small detachment of two boats—*V* 47 and *V* 67—which Commander Albrecht very imprudently sent towards the Gull, and which remained on patrol between the Gull and the Elbow buoy for the next hour. The Dover destroyers under Captain Percy Withers in the *Viking* cleared the harbour at about twenty minutes past eleven with orders to spread on a patrol between the South Foreland and Calais. Just after half-past eleven Captain Withers was ordered to take his division towards Ramsgate. He was recalled at midnight; for none of our forces had detected the presence of the two German destroyers between the Gull and the Elbow buoy and Admiral Bacon was under the impression that the whole German force had retired.

The Admiralty received Admiral Bacon's report of the night's work without comment. From the shortness of the bombardment and the rapidity with which the Germans withdrew it was clear that they knew quite well that we were defending the straits with forces far too powerful and numerous for them to oppose in any serious encounter. They had, it is true, every freedom to repeat these harassing night operations when they chose; but the attack had been so entirely fruitless that the risk was no longer worth taking: the Straits and the Downs seemed to be sufficiently safe under the existing dispositions.

It was satisfactory to know that this vital point in our sea communications was well covered; but the month of February—the first month of unrestricted submarine war—ended gloomily. The first effect of the German declaration apparently promised to justify Admiral von Holtzendorff's prophecy. Neutral shipping was abandoning the North Sea; Norwegian, Danish, Dutch and Swedish ships suspended their voyages, and neutral ships in British harbours refused to clear.<sup>1</sup>

In its purely military aspects the campaign was equally serious. It was evident from the outset that the western approaches to the British Isles would be the decisive theatre in the campaign against shipping. It was here that the oceanic routes converged, and as approaching and outgoing shipping was very much concentrated and obliged to follow certain routes, it could not possibly be defended by the method of dispersion. The western approach was, in fact, a sort of focal area, which could not be avoided and which

<sup>1</sup> For full details, see Fayle, Vol. III., Chap. III.

was too large to be thoroughly patrolled and watched. On February 1, when the campaign began, five German submarines were at work in the area, and their disposition showed that the German naval staff was thoroughly acquainted with our existing traffic routes. A large U-boat was stationed to the west of Mizen Head, and was attacking ships as they approached the patrolled route along the south coast of Ireland. Another was cruising between Mizen Head and the Scillies to pick up ships which avoided the coastal zone. A third was operating to the west of the Scillies; and a fourth was at work off Trevose Head, right on the patrolled route which ran round the Bristol Channel, and on which a large proportion of the Atlantic shipping was concentrated. The fifth, a boat of the UC type, was in the Channel between Portsmouth and Havre.

These dispositions were, as a whole, maintained throughout the month, although the proportion of U-boats to UC-boats varied; and the total number of operating submarines was sometimes increased to eight, when boats passed through the area on their way to the Mediterranean. The campaign was in many ways disquieting for us. Throughout the month the UC-boats from Belgium passed into the Channel through the Dover barrage, which seemed hardly to impede them. The obstruction, which had been begun in September 1916, now stretched right across the entrance to the Straits from the South Calliper to the West Dyck, and it seemed as though the enormous amount of material and labour expended upon it had been almost wasted. It was even more serious that the German submarine commanders were proving that they could operate with impunity quite close to those patrolled and defended routes which were the basis of our whole system of defence. A large submarine on the Bristol Channel route was not attacked or even disturbed by the auxiliary patrol vessels in the area. Half-way through the month, (February 11 and 12) a UC-boat cruised right along the outer edge of the patrolled route in the Channel, which Admiral Duff had recently reorganised and reinforced, and sank merchant shipping as she went. The inference was thus irresistible that the mosquito craft of the auxiliary patrol could not adequately protect shipping on the routes they were watching, or even drive submarines away from them; and if that was so, then the whole system of massing shipping along special routes must be considered unsound. It was even more ominous that the German submarines were operating with small risk of being brought to action, and in any case with very little danger of destruction. During the month there were thirty-

nine encounters between German submarines and British patrol and destroyer forces in Home Waters, and on only three occasions was a German submarine sunk. It was therefore not only very difficult to find and engage a U-boat, but even when this was achieved the chances of escape were thirteen to one in the German's favour. Of the sunken submarines two had been destroyed in the North Sea, and only one in the western approach area.<sup>1</sup> Such a rate of destruction was quite insufficient to check the campaign; but the one successful action in the western area deserves to be placed on record, for it shows not only what strenuous and highly disciplined efforts were necessary, and what risks must be accepted, in order to engage and defeat a single U-boat, but also to what degree these risks and difficulties had been increased by the change from restricted to unrestricted submarine war.

On February 9, 1917, Admiral Bayly reported to the Admiralty that he intended to station one "Q"-ship off the north coast of Ireland, one inside the triangle formed by the Scilly Isles, the Tuskar and the Blaskets, and all the remainder of these vessels to the south and west of Ireland. Amongst those whom he sent to the south-western approaches was Commander Gordon Campbell, whose name has not yet been mentioned in this work, but who had already earned a high reputation in the Q-ship service. His method of operating was a bold and simple one. His ship, Q 5, which had been an old collier named the *Farnborough*, was manned by a crew mainly drawn from the Mercantile Marine and the R.N.R., and trained by their commander to a high point of intelligence and self-control. The ship's part on falling in with a U-boat was to behave in every way as a common tramp, to misunderstand the enemy's signals, and finally to lie to, as if helpless, when fired upon. The crew would then abandon ship with well-acted panic, leaving on board only the commander and a few concealed gunners with the masked battery. Commander Campbell during the earlier months of 1916 had by these means on two occasions induced a U-boat to come to the surface within easy range of him, with the intention of sinking the supposed tramp by gunfire; but in both cases it was the *Farnborough*'s gunners who had sunk

<sup>1</sup> The German losses for the month were:

- UC 39 on February 8 by H.M.S. *Thrasher*, near Flamborough Head.  
UC 46 " " 8 " " Liberty, in the northern entrance to the  
Straits of Dover.  
U 83 " " 17 " " Q 5, off the south-west of Ireland.  
UC 32 " " 23 on a mine off Sunderland.

their enemy. Commander Campbell had run up the white ensign at exactly the right moment, the shutter which concealed the battery had been simultaneously dropped, and some twenty rounds had ended the engagement. It was soon known, however, that the German submarine officers had received orders to be more cautious in approaching their prey, even when apparently helpless; and when the unrestricted campaign began, the *Farnborough's* method appeared to be no longer a possible one, for even a genuine tramp was now to be treated on the same footing as a warship, and torpedoed at sight without warning. Commander Campbell determined to accept the new danger and outbid it: in order to perfect his disguise and secure his action at close range, he ordered his officers on watch to manoeuvre deliberately so as to get the ship torpedoed. The most cunning or apprehensive U-boat commander would hardly suspect a sinking vessel; and before she sank she might well get her chance.

The *Q 5* was one of the largest and best armed of the vessels employed in submarine decoying: she was of 3,000 tons, and had an armament of five 12-pounders, two 6-pounders and a maxim. She sailed from Queenstown on February 9, and cruised for over a week without sighting anything, or hearing anything but the distress calls of vessels all around her. The weather was extremely bad, but on February 17 it moderated, and at a quarter to ten *Q 5* was about thirty-five miles to the west-south-west of the Great Skellig, on an easterly course. No one on watch was aware that a submarine was about until a torpedo was reported coming straight for the ship from the starboard side. The torpedo being so well aimed, no manœuvring was necessary to ensure being hit; Commander Campbell merely put his helm over to try and save the engine-room. In this he was only partly successful, for the torpedo crashed into the foremost part of number 3 hold, and burst the after engine-room bulkhead. The chief engineer at once reported that the engine-room was filling, and received in reply the order to "hold on for as long as he could and then hide."

"Action" was then sounded and all hands went quietly to stations previously arranged. Every man except those required on board for the fight then abandoned ship in two lifeboats and one dinghy—a fourth boat was partly lowered, with carefully-acted confusion. Commander Campbell lay concealed on the bridge and watched the submarine's periscope about a cable's length away. She was the *U 83*, one of the Germans' newest boats, under the charge of Lieutenant-Commander Bruno Hoppe. He had been out of Germany for

three weeks, which he had spent in raiding the Scillies area. Captain Hoppe was entirely deceived as to the real state of affairs; he approached Q 5 slowly, with his vessel still submerged, and Commander Campbell saw U 83 pass down his starboard side under water about ten yards away. The temptation to open fire was almost unbearable; but Commander Campbell resisted it, thinking it better to wait until the enemy had broken surface and exposed himself. He did so when about 300 yards on the Q-ship's port bow, and again moved slowly past her. A minute or so later he was on a bearing from which all our guns could bear, and was enveloped in a hurricane of bursting shell. There was no missing at such a range, and all was over in a few minutes. "He finally sank," wrote Commander Campbell, "with his conning-tower opened and shattered, and with the crew pouring out." The "cease fire" was sounded, and one of the lifeboats was sent to their assistance; but of the whole crew one officer—a sub-lieutenant named Bœnicke—and a seaman, were the only ones who could be saved: the rest had perished in the explosion of the U-boat and in the dense oil from her which covered the surface.

Commander Campbell had now to look to his own ship: the engine-room and two boiler-rooms were filling rapidly, and she appeared to be sinking. In response to a signal, the *Narwhal*, *Buttercup* and *Laburnum* arrived early in the afternoon. Q 5 was taken in tow and the four ships made slowly for Buncrana, at times almost in desperate conditions. When they reached harbour at half-past nine on the following day Q 5 had a list of nearly twenty degrees and her stern was "nearly eight feet under water."

The venture, then, was completely successful, and it was not the last of Commander Campbell's successes; but it could not be held to have solved our problem, for it could not be repeated with sufficient frequency or certainty. It proved only that a large and specially equipped ship, with a highly trained crew under fine leadership, might with exceptional good fortune strike a U-boat off the list and yet escape destruction herself. But the stake was a heavy one, both in men and material, and the output of the German submarine yards could not be kept down by rare successes, however brilliantly won. The sky was lightened by a momentary flash: the darkness remained and deepened. During February 540,000 tons of shipping, British, Allied and neutral, was sunk. Twelve vessels had been destroyed in the North Sea, twenty-five in the Channel, seven in the Irish Sea, fourteen in the Bristol Channel, eleven in the approaches to the

Scillies and eighteen in the approaches to the Fastnets. There was nothing yet in sight to show that Admiral von Holtzendorff's forecast was an over-sanguine estimate.

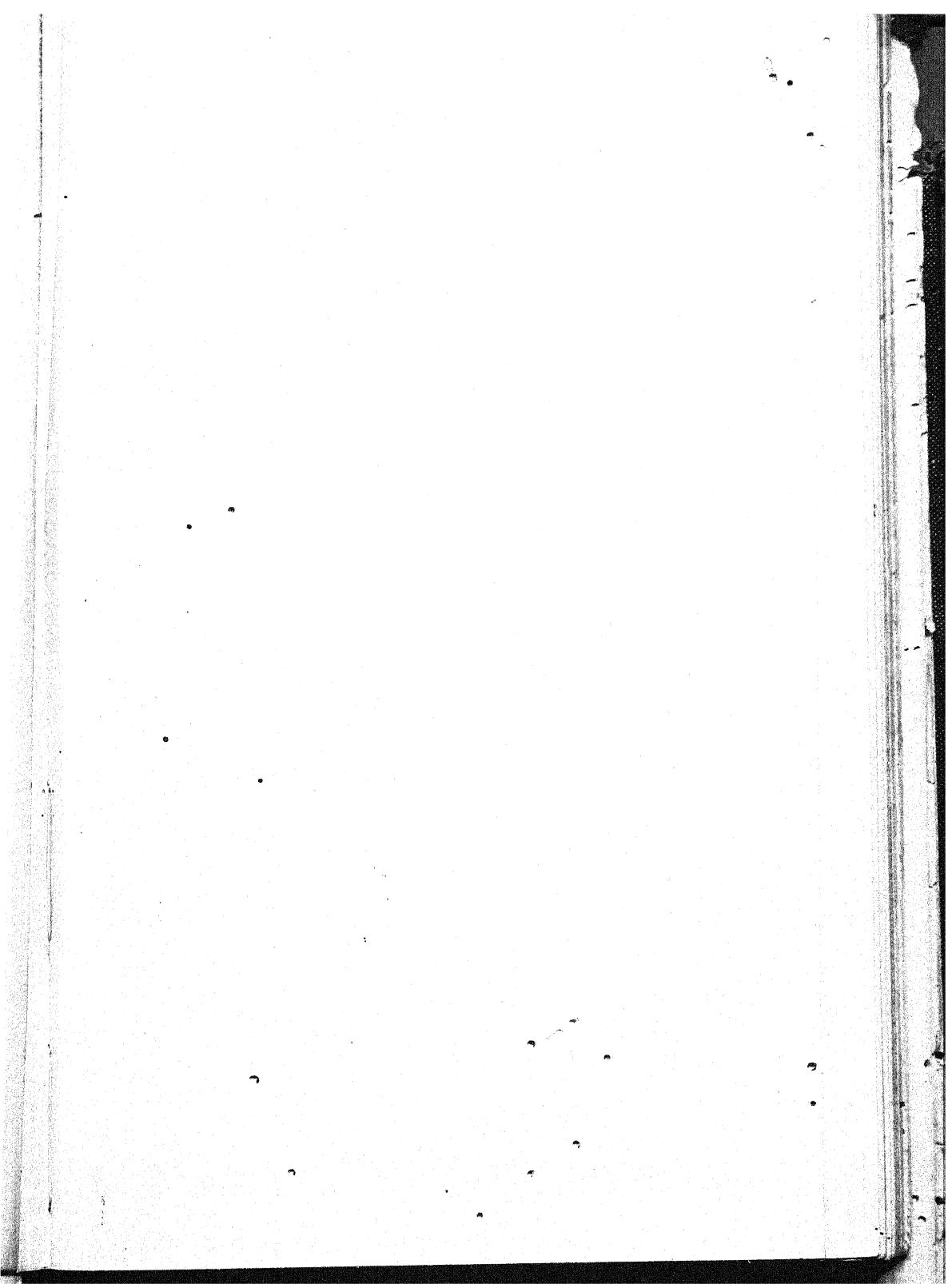
## 7

*Further Attacks on the Dover Straits*

There were now clear indications that the submarine campaign was diverting to itself the main resources and energies of both sides. Admiral Scheer speaks of a sacrifice of personnel and of material by the High Seas Fleet to the U-boats, and he adds that it affected the efficiency of his battle squadrons. The British Admiralty had also become aware of a change: they had good reason to believe that in the months which had elapsed since the battle of Jutland the increased superiority of the Grand Fleet had been tacitly recognised, and that in the present circumstances the High Seas Fleet was not likely to be employed in any serious movement. On March 11 they wired to the Commander-in-Chief that he should use his destroyer flotillas freely for hunting the enemy's submarines.

The message reached him three days after a successful and not unimportant experiment. On March 2 he had ordered the submarine commander at the Tees to send two G-boats north to patrol between Scapa and Norway.<sup>1</sup> The order was evidently given in pursuance of his new policy of keeping a submarine patrol at work across the track of the U-boats which used the north-about route. The boats sent on this duty were *G 13* and *E 49*, and their experiment was successfully carried out, though their fate was widely different. *E 49* was lost on a mine in Balta Sound on March 12; but four days earlier Lieutenant Bradshaw in *G 13* torpedoed and sank *UC 43* off Muckle Flugga, and thereby proved that it was not impossible to waylay a U-boat on the passage to its hunting ground. The Commander-in-Chief decided that it was worth while to strengthen the attack upon these routes; he therefore called up two more submarines from the Tees (*G 7* and *G 8*), and ordered the Scapa submarines to watch an area west of the Fair Island channel and to the south-west of the Orkneys. After receiving the Admiralty telegram to use his destroyers more freely, he also made arrangements for keeping a division of destroyers in the Fair Island channel whenever submarines were reported.

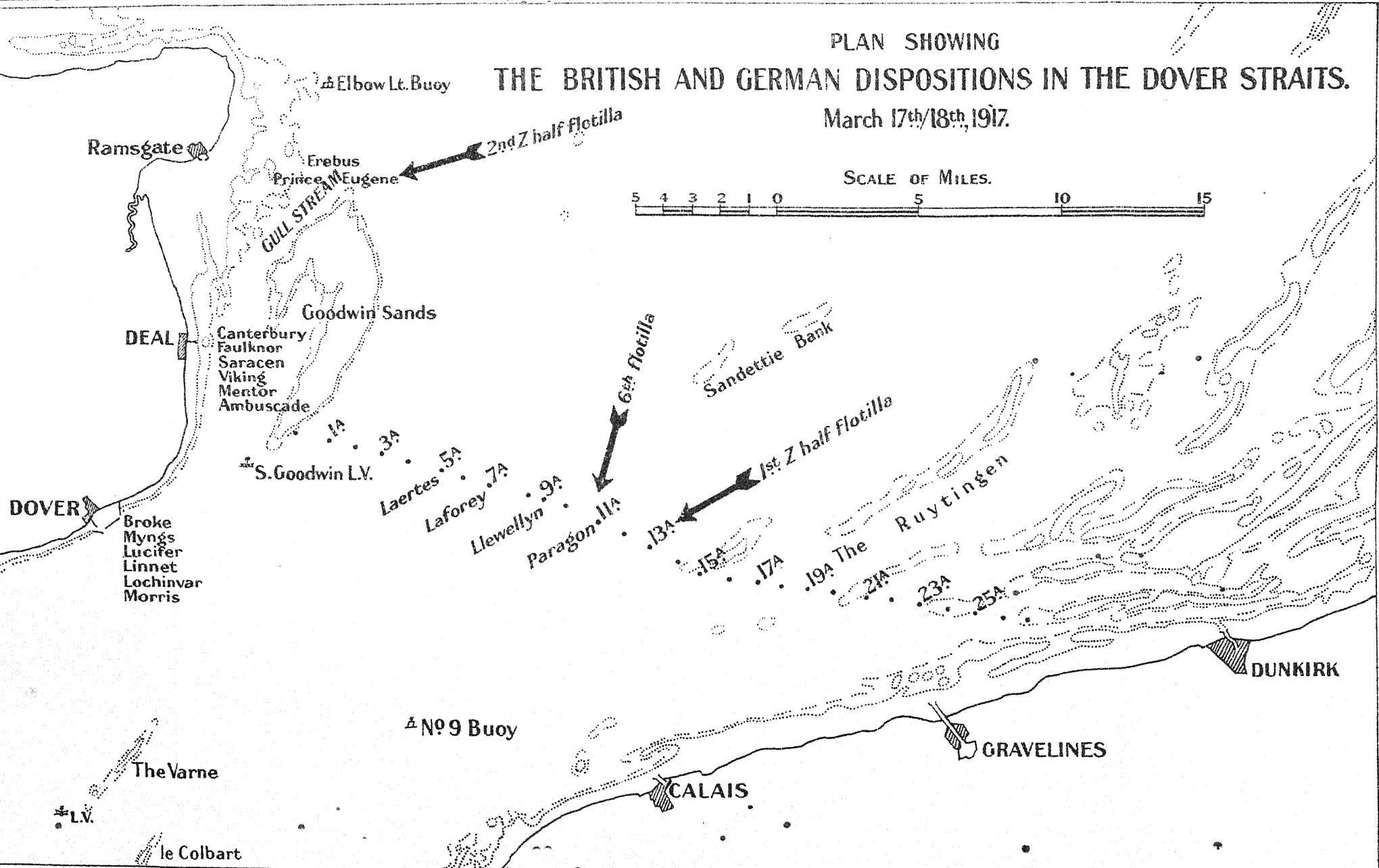
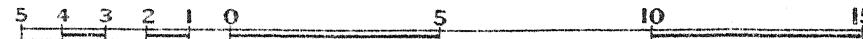
<sup>1</sup> The "G" class were submarines of 695 tons surface displacement; they were armed with one 3-inch gun and five torpedo tubes.



PLAN SHOWING  
THE BRITISH AND GERMAN DISPOSITIONS IN THE DOVER STRAITS.

March 17<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup>, 1917.

SCALE OF MILES.



These were the first steps of a policy which later became the essence of our offensive anti-submarine campaign : that of using concentrated specially composed forces in operations thought out beforehand with the same degree of precision as coastal bombardments, landings and cruiser sweeps. It was, in fact, the beginning of the transition from the patrolling or watching system, which had hitherto held the field, to the new system of concerted operations. The alteration in our plan of war seems not to have been based upon theory or discussion, but to have been suggested by experience and instinct, as an opening may be suggested in the heat of conflict to a swordsman of the aggressive temperament.

Soon after these decisions had been taken, the guerrilla warfare in the Flanders Bight blazed up afresh. On Saturday March 17 the Admiralty received warning that some movement was impending in the southern part of the North Sea, and a warning was accordingly sent to all local commanders. Admiral Bacon did not alter his dispositions for the night, which were substantially the same as those in force at the time of the previous raid. Four destroyers were maintaining the barrage patrol : the *Laertes* (senior officer) was off 5A buoy ; the *Laforey* off 7A ; the *Llewellyn* off 9A ; and the *Paragon* off 11A. In the small Downs, off Deal, were the light cruiser *Canterbury*, the flotilla leader *Faulknor* and the destroyers *Saracen*, *Viking*, *Mentor* and *Ambuscade*. The monitors *Erebus* and *Prince Eugene* were anchored off Ramsgate at the northern entrance to the Downs. The flotilla leader *Broke* and the destroyers *Myngs*, *Lucifer*, *Linnet*, *Lochinvar* and *Morris* were in reserve at Dover. The Admiralty had correctly assumed that the German forces were moving ; for the flotillas at Zeebrugge were about to raid the straits.

This time the forces allotted to the attack were more concentrated than in the previous raid. The half flotilla which in February had been ordered to operate against the Dutch traffic route had cruised fruitlessly off the Hook for three and a half hours and had returned to harbour with nothing to report. Such quarry as was to be found was evidently in the Dover Straits and its northern approaches ; it was, in consequence, in this area alone that the available German forces were ordered to operate. Commander Tillessen, who was in charge of the operation, divided the area to be attacked into three zones. The first was to the west of a line joining buoy number 7A on the barrage to light buoy number 9. He himself was to operate in this area with the 6th Flotilla—(S 49 leader; *G 86*, *G 87*—11th Half Flotilla under Lieutenant-Commander Rümann—and *V 43*, *V 45*, *G 37*, *V 46*—the 12th Half Flotilla

under Lieutenant-Commander Lahs). The second zone of operation was to the east of the line joining the two buoys; it was allotted to Commander Konrad Albrecht, who commanded the first Z half flotilla—*V 67, V 68, G 95, G 96*—from the leader, *V 47*. The third zone—the Downs anchorage—was allotted to Lieutenant-Commander Zander who led the second Z half flotilla (*S 15* leader; *S 18, S 20* and *S 24*). The peculiarity of this allocation of force was that the attack upon our most important position—the Downs—was entrusted to the weakest of the three operating detachments. Commander Tillessen took great precautions that the German advantage of being able to open fire at sight, and without challenge, should not be prejudiced by any possible confusion between the operating forces. Not only were the areas allotted to each detachment most strictly defined: their lines of approach were kept distinct. Commander Tillessen was to approach the barrage from the north and west of the Sandettie; Commander Konrad Albrecht was to keep the bank on his starboard hand, and cross the barrage near buoy 11A.

The German flotillas left harbour between 6 and 8 p.m.; Commander Tillessen crossed the barrage at about 10.35; Commander Konrad Albrecht was about a quarter of an hour behind him on the other side of the Sandettie, and the 6th Flotilla first came into contact with our destroyers. The *Paragon* was just completing her run to the south-westward when Commander Tillessen was crossing the barrage considerably to the eastward of the track assigned to him in his orders. At 10.50, whilst the *Paragon* was on a north-easterly course towards number 11A buoy, the look-out men sighted the leading destroyers of the 6th Flotilla, steaming across her bows. The commanding officer challenged, and they replied with torpedoes and gun-fire. Before his signalmen had completed the challenge a torpedo struck the engine-room, and his destroyer was in a heavy shell fire. In a few moments all was over, the depth charges on board exploded and the *Paragon* broke in two and sank. There were only ten survivors.

But in spite of all his precautions Commander Tillessen was not able to secure himself against the hazards and uncertainties of a night action. When the German destroyers opened fire, Lieutenant-Commander Lahs commanding the 12th Half Flotilla saw, or thought he saw, the leading boat of the flotilla turning to starboard. He therefore led his half flotilla round to starboard, and by so doing lost touch with the rest of the force. Realising that if he followed and regained contact, Commander Tillessen would probably open

fire upon him—for the essence of the German plan was evidently that all who were fallen in with should be treated as enemies—he steered straight back across the barrage and made for home. When the *Paragon* was sunk, Commander Konrad Albrecht was just leading his half flotilla across the barrage; he saw the explosion on his starboard bow but for the moment he kept to his course.

The explosion was sighted by most of our destroyers on patrol; but they did not all account for it in the same way. The *Llewellyn*, the next on patrol, reported to Dover that there was "heavy firing in the direction of Calais," the *Laforey* concluded from the explosion that one of the destroyers on patrol had been mined, left her station and came into a mass of wreckage at about eleven o'clock. She then turned on her searchlight and signalled by visual to the *Llewellyn* that a ship had blown up, and that she required her assistance to pick up survivors. The *Llewellyn* was by then on her way; and Commander Tillessen was also returning to the position.

For a few minutes after his action with the *Paragon*, he held his flotilla to its south-westerly course; then he turned, and steered back. He passed the wreck of the *Paragon* at about eleven o'clock, and about ten minutes later sighted the *Laforey's* searchlight astern of him, playing upon another destroyer. He at once turned into the straits again, and in a few minutes came up with the *Llewellyn*. The Germans kept their guns silent; but *G 87* and *S 49* each fired a torpedo; one of them struck the fore part of the *Llewellyn* and brought her up. Commander Tillessen steamed on to the south-west, and five minutes later established contact with Commander Konrad Albrecht, who on sighting a second detonation, and seeing searchlights, had decided to leave his zone of operations and concentrate upon the 6th Flotilla. The two forces turned north-eastwards in company and passed the barrage without incident at about half-past eleven.

Commander Tillessen's decision to deliver his second attack with torpedoes only, may have been due to sound judgment or to mere hazard: it certainly turned to his advantage. The *Laforey* and *Llewellyn* were in company when the *Llewellyn* was struck; neither commanding officer sighted another destroyer, and the *Laforey's* captain was convinced that both the *Paragon* and the *Llewellyn* had been attacked by a submarine.

These successive disasters left only the *Laertes* on the regular patrol; for her commanding officer heard no sound when he sighted the explosion, and concluded that what he saw was the flare of an iron foundry near Calais. Soon after,

however, he took in a detailed message reporting to Dover that the *Paragon* and *Llewellyn* had both been torpedoed off 11A buoy. He then steamed towards the eastern end of the barrage. When he arrived near the buoy he fell in with the *Llewellyn*, which was still able to steam stern first. The German boats were nowhere to be seen, and the *Laforey* had made off to the north-eastward to search for the submarine which the commanding officer believed had done the damage.

The Admiral at Dover was hampered by uncertainty as to what was actually happening in the straits. He received the report from the *Llewellyn* that there was heavy firing in the direction of Calais, and almost simultaneously Calais reported that firing had been observed. Soon after, he received a signal from the *Laforey* that she was picking up survivors, and on this he ordered his reserve force into the straits (11.20 p.m.). Just after he had done so he received a further report from the *Laforey* which ran: " *Paragon* and *Llewellyn* torpedoed two miles S.W. of 11A buoy—*Paragon* 10.50, *Llewellyn* 11.15. *Llewellyn* while picking up survivors." This confirmed his assumption that an enemy force was in the straits, and he signalled to the commanding officer of the *Broke* to "keep his boats together and look out for the enemy." Although half an hour had gone by since the Germans had first appeared, there was still a chance that they would be brought to action if they came westward. Just after he had issued his last instructions to the *Broke*, another message came in from the *Laforey*. The commanding officer now reported that the *Paragon* and *Llewellyn* had been attacked by submarines, and this obviously altered the whole position. It was useless to send more destroyers into a submarine trap which had already ensnared two boats; so Admiral Bacon cancelled his first order, told two "P" boats<sup>1</sup> (numbers 11 and 21) to go to the patrol line and hunt for a submarine between 11A buoy and the French coast, and ordered the *Laforey* and *Laertes* to retire five miles westward and keep up the patrol at high speed (11.50 to 11.55 p.m.). The *Broke* was just clear of the harbour when she received this second signal: she turned back at once and anchored in Dover harbour at midnight. No further news came through for three-quarters of an hour; but the enemy had not yet struck their last blow.

At about eleven o'clock Lieutenant-Commander Zander with his small detachment had sighted the lights of the

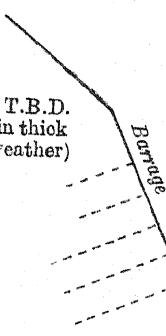
<sup>1</sup> The "P" or patrol boats were vessels of between 600 and 700 tons displacement, armed, generally, with one 4-inch and one or two 12-pounders.

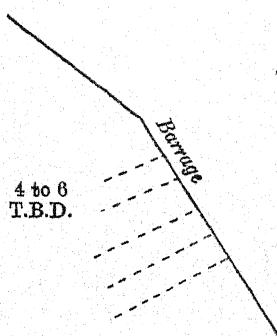
British coast near the North Foreland. As he had been ordered to turn back at one o'clock, he was rather ahead of time, so for the next hour and a half he cruised to and fro on an east and west course, at slow speed. Towards 12.30 a.m. he closed the northern opening of the anchorage.

The northern entrance to the Downs was guarded, as usual, by a line of drifters spread out between the Broadstairs Knoll and the North Sand Head; a torpedo boat (No. 4) cruised to the south of them. Normally no merchantmen were allowed to anchor north of the Gull; but on March 15 the s.s. *Greypoint* had been forced by engine trouble to anchor about a mile east of Broadstairs Knoll buoy; she was still there on the night of the raid.

Just after half-past twelve (March 18) the drifter *Paramount* sighted three destroyers approaching from the north-eastward; she was then, apparently, somewhere near the Broadstairs Knoll buoy. They replied to her green rocket with an outburst of gun-fire, directed against all the drifters in the neighbourhood, sank the *Greypoint* with a torpedo, and passed out of sight on a south-westerly course. A few minutes later they turned and opened fire on Ramsgate and Broadstairs. Meanwhile, the *Canterbury*'s division slipped their cables and got under way (12.42 a.m.); but almost as they did so, the bombardment ceased, and Lieutenant-Commander Zander withdrew. Torpedo boat No. 4 was then near the Gull, and at ten minutes to one her commanding officer sighted three enemy destroyers to the west of him, firing towards the land. He reported this to the *Canterbury* and strove to keep touch; but the Germans had the heels of him. Soon after one o'clock he lost sight of them near the Elbow buoy, steering eastwards at high speed. Admiral Bacon knew from several messages that the shore was being bombarded, and just after one o'clock he received a further message from the *Laforey* to say that it was destroyers and not submarines which had attacked the barrage patrol. He recalled the "P" boats at once, and waited for news from the Downs division, which he knew was under way. The *Canterbury*, *Faulknor* and the destroyers reached the North Goodwin light-vessel at a quarter-past one; but by then the enemy had disappeared and the raid was over.

This was the second occasion on which the German destroyers had attacked the straits and inflicted loss upon our defending forces. They must have known the difficulties of our position and their own advantages of opportunity, so that there seemed every reason to suppose they would go on and turn these raids upon the straits into a regular destroyer

| DOWNS  | DISPOSITIONS  |
|--|---|
| 1 large Mon. ready<br>1 small T.B.D. or<br>T.B. patrolling   | Daytime<br><i>During transport hours 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. (approx.)</i>               |
|  |  |
|  | 4 T.B.D.<br>(in thick weather)  |
| DOVER  | LA PANNE  |
| 1 Large Mon., guns at ready<br>1 Cr. at ready<br>(1½ hours' notice after transport hours)<br>4 T.B.D. at ready when visibility is bad,<br>in case of a day raid. 1 hour's notice<br>in fine weather<br>1 Cr. at 1½ hours' notice<br>2 or 3 Flotilla leaders at 1 hour's notice | Nothing   |
|  | DUNKIRK   |
|  | 4 Large Mon.<br>2 "M" Mon.  |
| NOTE.—2 Large and 1 "M" Mon. usually refitting and 1 "M" Mon. standing off at Dover  |   |

| DOWNS   | DISPOSITIONS   |
|---|--|
| 1 Cr.<br>1 Flotilla leader } ready to<br>4 T.B.D. } slip  | Light Nights<br><i>(Approx. 5 days after New Moon till 7 days before)</i>          |
| 1 Small T.B.D. or<br>T.B. patrolling<br>1 Large Mon. ready  |  |
|   |  |
| DOVER   | LA PANNE   |
| 1 Large Mon., guns at ready<br>1 Cr. at 1½ hours' notice<br>1 or 2 Flotilla leaders at ready<br>4 to 6 T.B.D. ready | 4 to 6 T.B.D.<br>1 Large Mon.<br>1 "M" Mon.  |
|   | DUNKIRK  |
|   | 3 Large Mon.<br>1 "M" Mon.   |
| NOTE.—2 Large and 1 "M" Mon. refitting and 1 "M" Mon. standing off at Dover   |  |

| DOWNS   | DISPOSITION   |
|---|---|
| <i>Active</i>   | Ready to  |
| <i>Attentive</i>  | slip  |
| 4 T.B.D.  |   |
| 1 Large Mon. ready  |   |
| 1 Small T.B.D. or T.B.<br>patrolling  |   |
|   | <i>(Approx. 7 days before to 5 days after New Moon)</i> |
|   | Dark Nights<br>Bad weather                              |
|   |   |
| DOVER   | Barrage   |
| 1 Large Mon. guns at<br>ready   | 4 T.B.D.,<br>brought up<br>to 6 if<br>available         |
| 2 or 3 Flotilla leaders<br>ready  |   |
| 4 to 6 T.B.D. ready   |   |
|   |   |
|   |   |
| <b>NOTE.—2 Large and 1 "M" Mon.<br/>usually away refitting and 1<br/>"M" Mon. standing off at<br/>Dover</b> |   |
|   | LA PANNE  |
|   | 1 Large Mon.  |
|   | 1 "M" Mon.  |
|   | DUNKIRK   |
|   | 3 Large Mon.  |
|   | 1 "M" Mon.  |

| DOWNS   | DISPOSITION   |
|---|---|
| <i>Active</i>   | Ready to  |
| <i>Attentive</i>  | slip  |
| 4 T.B.D.  |   |
| 1 Large Mon. ready  |   |
| 1 Small destroyer or<br>T.B. patrolling   |   |
|   | <i>(Approx. 7 days before to 5 days after New Moon)</i> |
|   | Dark Nights<br>Fine weather                             |
|   |   |
| DOVER   | Barrage   |
| 1 Large Mon., guns at<br>ready  | 2 T.B.D.  |
| 4 to 6 T.B.D. at ready  | 2 T.B.D. and<br>2 or 3 Flotilla<br>leaders              |
|   |   |
| <b>NOTE.—2 Large and 1 "M" Mon.<br/>usually away refitting and 1 "M" Mon.<br/>standing off at Dover</b> |   |
|   | LA PANNE  |
|   | 1 Large Mon.  |
|   | 1 "M" Mon.  |
|   | DUNKIRK   |
|   | 3 Large Mon.  |
|   | 1 "M" Mon.  |

war of attrition. "The enemy," wrote Admiral Bacon in his report, "need only keep a rigid lookout, when close to the straits, for one hour, and fire a torpedo at everything he sees and run away. . . . The enemy can vary the time of attack at will and choose their night. They can predetermine whether to 'shoot and scoot' or to carry out a more or less prolonged attack. The best disposition of my destroyers differs in each of these two forms of attack."

Some days after the raid Admiral Bacon discussed the whole question at the Admiralty, and altered his dispositions for the defence of the barrage. His revised orders, issued five days after the raid was over, divided the barrage into an eastern (7A light buoy to Calais) and a western (5A light buoy to the South Goodwins) patrol. Each was to be watched by a flotilla leader and a detachment of destroyers, steaming parallel to the barrage instead of at right angles to it as hitherto. These new dispositions were apparently only to be put into force "when the enemy showed a desire to raid the straits," that is, presumably when Admiral Bacon had some warning of impending activity.

His standing or normal dispositions for guarding the straits are easier to understand from diagrams than from detailed descriptions.

It seemed to the Admiralty that the enemy intended to follow up their success rapidly and energetically; for on March 23 news came into Whitehall that a new destroyer flotilla had reached Belgium from Germany. Commodore Tyrwhitt was at once ordered to move his available forces into the Swin, and the Commander-in-Chief was directed to send six destroyers to Harwich. For three nights special precautions were taken in the whole Thames and Dover Straits area. It then became evident that the new German flotilla did not intend to act as rapidly as had been expected, and Commodore Tyrwhitt was directed to take his force back to Harwich.

For many weeks past the Admiralty had been considering a set of proposals from the Commander-in-Chief, who wished to assemble a powerful submarine flotilla in the northern part of the North Sea. They had not agreed to his principal suggestions; but had decided to use submarines as a trade route patrol in the western approaches. The submarine flotillas were accordingly re-arranged and redistributed round the bases of the British Isles, in a plan of re-organisation which came into force at about the end of March. The Queenstown flotilla was increased to seven units (3 D. and 4 E.), and six boats (3 D. and 3 E.) were stationed at Lough

Swilly; the remaining changes were not so important.<sup>1</sup> As the Admiralty had not felt able to give the Commander-in-Chief the additional submarine flotilla for which he had asked, he called up the entire 10th Flotilla from the Tees and based it at Scapa. When it arrived, he organised it into three patrols: the Muckle Flugga, the Bergen-Lerwick and the St. Kilda. By this means he hoped to keep the submarine routes to and from the Atlantic, and the Scandinavian traffic routes, under continuous observation. It was too early to say whether this re-organisation of our submarine flotillas would affect the course of the campaign.

When the month of March opened there was a slight lull in the enemy's attack upon the western trade routes; but it was soon ended. On March 5, a U-boat of the larger type settled on the track between the Start and the Lizard, and five other boats were in the Irish Sea: one well out to sea, three others closer in and one other—a UC-boat—between the Nymphe Bank and the Scillies. They held these positions for roughly four days; but on the 9th the attack shifted to the eastward, and eight submarines were reported between the Channel and western Ireland. Three submarines—each of a large type—were then settled on the patrolled track of incoming shipping. One worked between the Tuskar and Queenstown, the second off the north coast of Cornwall, and the third off the south Devon coast near the Start. This attack upon the areas where our defensive forces were strongest and most concentrated lasted for a whole week, and it was not until the 17th that it was relaxed. On that day we located three submarines between the south coast of Ireland and the Great Sole Bank to the west of Ushant. A UC-boat had relieved the large U-boat to the south of the Start, and another UC-boat was cruising in mid-Channel between Ushant and Portland. The inshore attack had, however, been carried to the French coast with telling effect, and from the 17th a UC-boat operated against shipping in the Ushant area. The French patrols were as little able to dislodge or disturb her as our own further north, and by the end of the month twenty-seven more steamers and sailing vessels had gone to the bottom between Abervrach and La Rochelle. In our own waters the pressure off the west coast of Ireland became slightly less severe after the 20th; but two UC-boats were then located in the Start area, where they operated without let or hindrance until the 24th. On the 21st another UC-boat opened operations in the St. George's Channel off the Smalls; she then moved north into the Irish Sea and remained

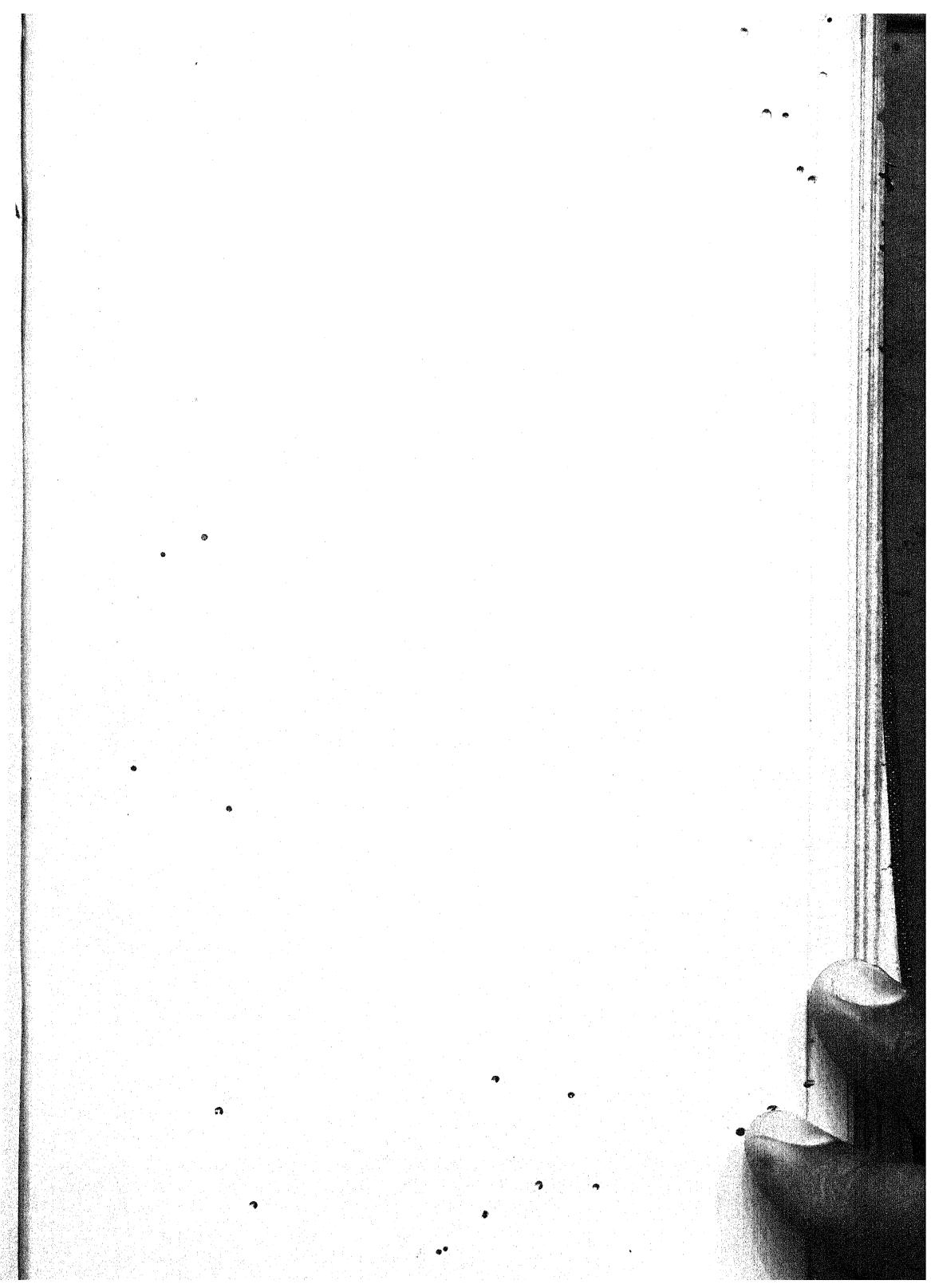
<sup>1</sup> See Appendix B.

there, sinking ships rapidly until the end of the month. Like her consorts in other areas, she was practically undisturbed by our counter measures.

Between March 1 and 31 the German submarines sank 353,478 tons of British and 220,363 tons of Allied and neutral shipping at the cost of four boats, three of which were lost in the North Sea. In the western approaches and the Mediterranean the enemy lost only one submarine, and the distribution of sinkings showed that the attack upon the western approaches was rising in severity. When we came to examine the situation at the end of the month, it was found that twenty-three vessels had been sunk in the North Sea and on the East coast, thirty-one in the Channel, nineteen in the Irish Sea, thirty-eight in the western approaches between Ireland and Ushant, nineteen in the Bay of Biscay south of the Penmarc'h, and seventeen in the Mediterranean.

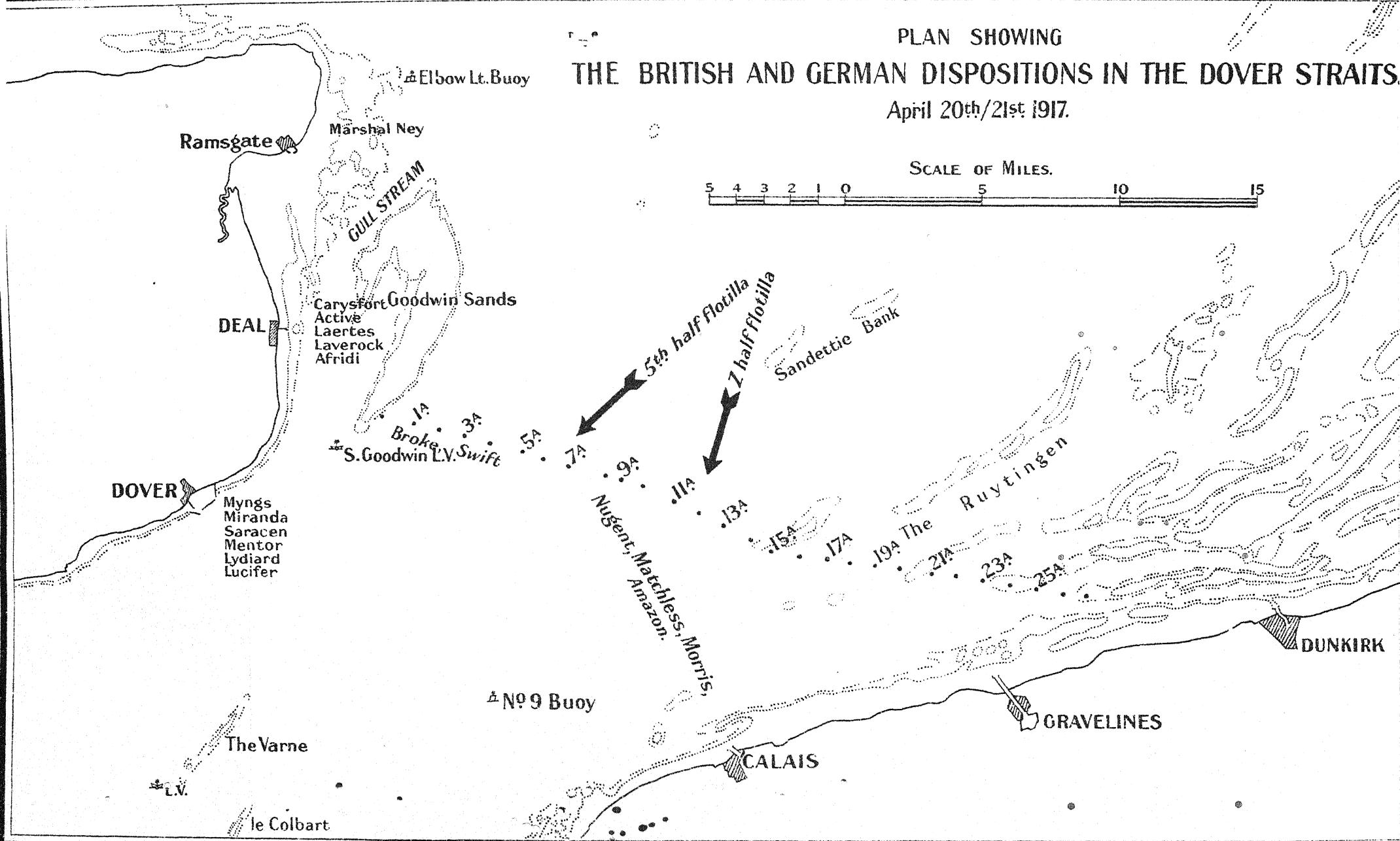
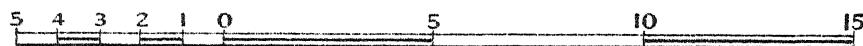
The High Naval Command did not attempt to conceal that the situation was getting out of hand. A "review of the naval situation," presented to the Government at the end of March, contained passages which deserve close attention. "The blockade [*i.e.*, the German submarine blockade] has now been in operation for some weeks, and the experience gained of it is sufficient to demonstrate the serious nature of the menace. . . . Even if we could rely upon the average number of the enemy submarines operating during the next six months as not exceeding that of the last month, it must be recognised that, with the advent of longer days and finer weather, the offensive capacity of the submarine will greatly increase. *As a matter of fact, we are faced with the certainty of an increase, month by month, in the number of hostile submarines.*" This was an outspoken admission that our counter measures were insufficient even to hold the danger at bay. It is true that the Admiralty referred later to new methods of war—which were not then in force and could not be tried for several months yet—but they drew no conclusion that they would turn the scale; all that they felt justified in saying was that these new methods of war must be "put against" the "certain increase" in the enemy's activity.

After reviewing the losses already caused, the Admiralty paper continued: "As regards probable losses in the near future, a not unreasonable estimate is considered to be 500,000 tons (Allied and neutral) during March, increasing possibly to 700,000 tons in June. From that month onwards some amelioration of the situation may be expected." It required but little foresight to see that if the Government



PLAN SHOWING  
THE BRITISH AND GERMAN DISPOSITIONS IN THE DOVER STRAITS.  
April 20th/21st 1917.

SCALE OF MILES.





agreed that this rate of loss was inevitable and beyond remedy, they were admitting that defeat was in sight : the "ameliorated situation" towards which the Admiralty was looking as a possibility was not one which would save the country from disaster and famine. The paper admitted, in the plainest terms, that the attack had outstripped the defence, and the third month of unrestricted submarine warfare opened gloomily.

Meanwhile Admiral Bacon had thought out a plan for retaliating upon the German flotilla at Zeebrugge. The Air Service reported to him that a certain number of the destroyers in the canal always slipped and went outside during an air raid. This, in Admiral Bacon's opinion, gave him an excellent chance of using some of the coastal motor boats which had been attached to his command for months past. An air raid was planned for the night of the 7th, and four coastal motor boats and the destroyer *Falcon* were ordered to co-operate in it and attack any German destroyers that they might find outside the harbour when the raid was over. The destroyer *Falcon* was attached as a supporting vessel. She left at dark and anchored at the eastern end of the banks off Dunkirk, ready to give assistance to the motor boats if they required it. The motor boats left Dunkirk at a quarter-past nine in the evening, so as to be off Zeebrugge two hours later, when the air raid began.<sup>1</sup> The weather was not particularly good; but they were not in difficulties until they cleared the banks of the Zuidecoote pass. The seas then washed them down continuously, and the labouring of the boats put a severe strain on the engines. Just after eleven o'clock they arrived at a light-buoy which the Germans had laid out to mark a minefield to the north of Zeebrugge. Lieutenant Beckett now turned to the south, with his boats behind him in the order 4, 9, 5, 6, and made for the Wielingen channel, where he hoped to find the enemy. He was not disappointed: on approaching the channel he found four destroyers at anchor, with their heads to the westward, as the tide was then flooding into the Scheldt. The boats now attacked in order. Lieutenant Beckett approached to within about three cables of the western destroyers and fired. He missed, and at once turned to the northward to watch. The others were luckier. "After a pause of two or three minutes," wrote Lieutenant Beckett, "a terrific explosion occurred and a destroyer was observed

<sup>1</sup> No. 4, Lieutenant W. N. T. Beckett, R.N., in charge of the detachment; No. 5, Acting Lieutenant F. C. Harrison, R.N.; No. 6, Lieutenant A. Swann, R.N.V.R.; No. 9, Lieutenant A. Dayrell Reed, R.N.R.

to be enveloped in smoke and water."<sup>1</sup> The boats had all delivered their attack in a few minutes, but some of them were in great danger. Lieutenant Beckett had ordered all his colleagues to retire to the north-north-west across the German minefield when they had fired their torpedoes. His own boat was filled with fumes and gas owing to the breakdown of one of his exhausts, and Lieutenant Harrison's boat had completely broken down, and lay under heavy fire in the beam of a destroyer's searchlight. For a whole five minutes she lay helpless, but thanks to the skill and energy of the motor mechanic the engines were re-started and Lieutenant Harrison escaped to the northward at 20 knots. The Germans, it seems, were completely taken by surprise, and there was no pursuit: the motor boats reached Dunkirk between 4 and 5 in the morning with their crews utterly exhausted.<sup>2</sup>

We have seen that a new German destroyer force had gone to Flanders during the last week in March. It was the third flotilla, composed of the fifth and sixth half flotillas. For nearly a month it remained at its bases, and was not ready for its first enterprise against the Dover Straits until April 20. Its operation orders were signed and issued on the previous day by Commander Kahle. They were based upon the same division of the Straits of Dover into zones, allotted to specified detachments of the operating forces; but they differed in certain important details. First, no force was to be sent to the Downs: the straits alone were to be raided; secondly, the senior officer of the flotilla—Commander Kahle—was to control the operation from ashore.

Experience of previous raids had shown that it was best to exercise command from the place where all British reports and orders were collected and deciphered. This place was the general headquarters of the Naval Corps, at Bruges; it was from here, therefore, that Commander Kahle, the senior officer of the flotilla, was ordered to take charge.

This was a new method of exercising command. We had certainly never centralised the control of offensive operations in the Flanders Bight, in anything like the same degree. During raids Admiral Bacon did, it is true, control the movements of our destroyers from ashore; but this was very different from what the Germans were doing. Admiral Bacon commanded from ashore when he was taking counter measures

<sup>1</sup> The torpedoed destroyer was G 88.

<sup>2</sup> All the officers and men were decorated. Lieutenants Harrison and Dayrell Reed received the D.S.O.; Lieutenants Beckett and Swann received the D.S.C.; the remainder were given D.S.C.'s and D.S.M.'s.

against a surprise attack : Commander Kahle was ordered to control a deliberately planned operation from an office, many miles away. The Admiralty frequently ordered forces at sea to return to their bases, when they learned that the enemy were taking counter measures; equally frequently they had ordered that operations should be postponed, if the situation demanded it; but when once our forces had sailed the senior officer had always been in absolute control. The intelligence upon which Commander Kahle was to rely for controlling an entire operation was, by us, always transmitted to officers commanding at sea, as advisory information.

For the rest, the operation orders were drafted upon previous models. Commander Gautier, in charge of the 5th Half Flotilla, and one boat from the 6th Half Flotilla—*V 71, V 73, V 81, S 53, G 85* and *G 42*—was to operate in the part of the straits which lies to the north and west of a line joining the Sandettie Bank and the Colbart; he was to attack all outpost forces found within his zone of operations, and was to bombard Dover in so far as our counter measures left him the opportunity to do so. Commander Konrad Albrecht in *V 47*, with a "Z" Half Flotilla, and two boats from the 6th Half Flotilla—*G 95, V 68, G 96, G 91* and *V 70*—was to operate on the southern and eastern side of the Sandettie-Colbart line, and was to bombard Calais if he thought it feasible.

The Admiralty had no indications of a coming raid, and Admiral Bacon had not, in consequence, been given any special warning. His chief anxiety was still the shipping in the Downs, which had just been raided by aeroplanes carrying torpedoes. His dispositions in the straits were normal. At 8.30 a.m. on April 20 Commander E. L. Cardale in the *Nugent* sailed with the *Matchless*, *Morris* and *Amazon* for the daylight patrol, and spread them across the straits from west to east in this order as soon as they reached the barrage. At dusk the last-named three destroyers closed the *Nugent* and patrolled the eastern side of the barrage in company between 7A buoy and Calais. Shortly afterwards (7.45 p.m.) the destroyer leaders *Broke* and *Swift* left harbour to patrol "as a division" between the South Goodwin light vessel and buoy No. 5A. As guns had recently been mounted at the North Foreland and Foreness, the Downs division was not so powerful as it had been before. On the night of the 20th the light cruiser *Carysfort*, the flotilla cruiser *Active* and the destroyers *Laertes*, *Laverock* and *Afridi* were at anchor in the small Downs; the monitor *Marshal Ney* was anchored off Ramsgate. During the morning the Vice-Admiral had ordered

the *Falcon*, the *Racehorse*, torpedo boat No. 15, the *Crane* and "P" boat No. 50 to maintain the coastal patrols between Margate and the western limit of his command for the next twenty-four hours. The reserve, or striking force, known as the first division, consisted on this night of the destroyers *Myngs*, *Miranda*, *Saracen* (1st Sub-Division); *Mentor*, *Lydiard*, *Lucifer* (2nd Sub-Division).

Although the Admiral had provided as well as he could against any contingency that might arise at sea, he was anxiously aware that the enemy's raids upon the straits might at any moment create an awkward situation. He kept his reserve of destroyers at Dover as much for the protection of the town and anchorage as for the reinforcement of the outer patrols, and he calculated that if any German destroyers ever attacked Dover his own forces would be in action with them a quarter of an hour after they opened fire. If, then, the shore defences opened at once upon the flashes of the enemy's guns, there would be a danger that our own destroyers might be in the line of fire. He therefore proposed that the General Commanding ashore should not open fire upon bombarding forces until the Vice-Admiral told him it was safe to do so. To this the General could not agree, and the Admiralty, realising that the matter ought to be settled as quickly as possible, arranged that the local naval and military authorities should confer together at Whitehall; but the meeting had not taken place, and the point was consequently still unsettled, when the raid occurred.

Between a quarter-past six and seven on this night Commanders Gautier and Konrad Albrecht left harbour to raid the straits; Commander Albrecht struck the first blow at Calais: at about ten minutes past eleven his detachment appeared off the town and shelled the surrounding country for about five minutes. The *Nugent*, patrolling with her division to the westward of her patrol line, sighted the flashes and steered towards them for a few minutes. The gun-fire then ceased, and Commander Cardale at once returned to his patrol station. The *Swift* and the *Broke*, at the western end of the barrage, also sighted the gun-fire, and thinking that the *Nugent*'s division might be in action, steamed eastwards to support Commander Cardale. About a quarter of an hour later they intercepted a signal from the *Nugent* to the Vice-Admiral at Dover, saying that there were gun flashes to the S.S.E. This proved that the *Nugent* was not engaged, so the *Swift* and *Broke* at once turned back for their ordinary patrol (about 11.30 p.m.). No more was heard of the Calais

detachment for the rest of the night; but a few minutes later Dover was attacked.

The *Sabreur*, a trawler on the coastal patrol, was the first to sight the German destroyers. Just before half-past eleven skipper Robert Scott, whose trawler was then off a wreck-marking vessel to the south-east of Dover, sighted a group of destroyers to the southward. They opened fire on him, and hit his ship once or twice; but he put out his lights and managed to get away to the westward. The Germans at once opened on the town, and the shore batteries replied: it was now about 11.30. The German fire was extremely wild, "a considerable number of shells were fired blindly into the county of Kent"; but Admiral Bacon did not apparently feel free to send out his first division until the bombardment was over. At a quarter to twelve he ordered it to go outside, but not to proceed further without orders. He cancelled this order a few moments later, and it was not until five minutes to twelve that he sent out the six destroyers of that division.<sup>1</sup> By then firing had ceased and the Germans were well on their way back to the barrage.

When the *Myngs* left harbour all the destroyers in the Straits were at their regular stations. The *Swift* and the *Broke* had both sighted the gun-fire off Dover, but did not know what had occasioned it. Shortly after midnight the senior officer of the first division signalled to the *Broke* that he was approaching with six destroyers; as our boats had so frequently been handicapped by the difficulty of distinguishing between friend and foe this was a wise precaution. In order to secure himself further against any possible confusion or misunderstanding, the senior officer decided to patrol between the South Goodwin and the eastern entrance to Dover harbour, and signalled his intentions to Commander A. M. Peck in the *Swift* (12.19). This line of patrol only touched the area being watched by the *Swift* and *Broke* at one point—the South Goodwin—so that there was now little chance of any mistake or delay in opening fire if strange destroyers appeared suddenly in the zone covered by one of the three British detachments in the straits.

They did appear, and for a somewhat curious reason. Commander Gautier reached the barrage at about a quarter-past twelve; he had seen nothing of our outpost forces except the *Sabreur* and was indeed ahead of the forces we had sent

<sup>1</sup> The destroyers of the reserve division did not all leave harbour at the same time. The first sub-division (*Myngs*, *Miranda*, *Saracen*) sailed at once; the second sub-division (*Mentor*, *Lydiard*, *Lucifer*) was not clear of the entrance until nearly half an hour later.

out against him. He was well ahead of time, and he seems to have decided that he ought not to return to harbour without making some attempt to attack the forces which had been put down in his operation orders as his first objectives; he therefore turned westward towards the southern entrance of the Downs. Although this new move was in fact taking his flotilla straight into our concentration, some of the German commanders seem to have thought themselves safe, and to have relaxed their precautions. Commander von Arnim of *G 42*, at all events, gave orders that the crews of the guns and torpedo tubes could "fall out."

Meanwhile Admiral Bacon, who knew of nothing which could hold the Germans back, had practically given up all hope of intercepting or of bringing them to action. At midnight he asked Commander Peck in the *Swift* if he had seen anything of the enemy's destroyers, and was told in reply that they had not been sighted.<sup>1</sup> Shortly after receiving this answer from the *Swift* Admiral Bacon recalled the first division (12.25 a.m.). The second sub-division, which was then only just clear of the harbour entrance, at once returned; the first sub-division, which was now patrolling between the South Goodwin and Dover, turned to obey the recall; but in a few minutes the whole situation changed.

On learning that the reserve destroyers were at sea, Commander Peck of the *Swift* shifted his line of patrol slightly to the eastward, and at a quarter to one he was on a westerly course, about three miles to the east of the light vessel; the *Broke* was in station astern of him. He was just about to turn to the eastward when the lookout reported destroyers on his port bow. At the same moment his ship came under fire, and ten seconds later he could make out flares from the funnels of five or six boats, steaming on an opposite course to himself. They were Commander Gautier's division which was now steaming eastward towards the centre of the barrage. Commander Peck at once gave orders to open fire, and put his helm hard a starboard to ram the nearest destroyer. He missed her, for the *Swift* passed through the enemy's line and was hit several times in the next few minutes; but, as she passed through, one of her torpedoes seemed to hit a German destroyer, and her lyddite shell fire was very telling. Commander Peck was blinded by the flash of his fo'c'sle gun, and when he recovered his sight he was told that his wireless was out of action, and that there were four feet of water on the stokers' mess deck. The

<sup>1</sup> The flotilla leaders, it would seem, had not previously been told definitely that there were enemy destroyers in the straits.

German destroyers were to the east of him and he followed in chase.

Commander E. R. G. R. Evans, who was in charge of the *Broke*, sighted the German destroyers at the same instant as his colleague and acted in the same way. He put his helm hard over to ram the nearest boat; but at the same moment his torpedo gunner fired a torpedo which seemed to hit. Thinking that it would be useless to ram an enemy already so badly damaged, Commander Evans steadied his ship again for a few moments, and then put his helm hard a starboard for a second time, to ram a destroyer further down in the enemy's line. The *Broke* crashed into her abreast the after funnel, and for a few minutes was incapable of any further manœuvre. The rammed destroyer was *G 42*; there were apparently two boats astern of her, and as they steamed up to the *Broke*, which was still lying helpless with a mass of wreckage upon her stem, they poured a heavy and destructive shell fire into her. It was some minutes before Commander Evans got clear, and then, finding that his ship was "going ahead still with a fair turn of speed," he followed after the *Swift*, which was to the eastward, chasing the retreating Germans. Behind him he could see the wreck of a German destroyer which was blazing fiercely. A minute or so later reports from his subordinates showed him that his ship was so damaged that he could not possibly join in the pursuit. One of the boiler-rooms was badly injured, and steam was falling rapidly; the enemy's shells had exploded a number of cartridges on the deck, and the starboard side of his bridge was burning. He therefore put his helm over, and turned towards the scene of the action. When he reached it, he found that the German destroyer which he had rammed was sinking by the stern, and that, near by, another German destroyer (*G 85*) was lying helpless and in flames. Desperate as their position was the Germans gave no signs of surrender, and opened fire on the *Broke* as she came near. Commander Evans replied, and silenced them; but simultaneously his engines stopped, and his ship drifted helplessly towards the burning destroyer. "After we had silenced her, she blazed even more furiously, and I feared that the foremost magazine would blow up before she sank. By this time my stem was nearly touching her, and the engineer sent up to say that he could not move the engines more. I replied that we must go astern if possible or we might blow up." It was now about twenty minutes past one.

Help was not far off. The firing which began at a quarter to one, when the *Swift* and *Broke* first fell in with the German

destroyers, was sighted from all parts of the straits. The *Nugent's* division heard it, and Commander Cardale very properly decided to remain where he was; the second sub-division, which, as we have seen, had just returned to harbour, slipped for the second time during the night, and made towards the gun flashes. On clearing the harbour Lieutenant-Commander A. J. Landon signalled to the senior officer of the first division that he was taking his sub-division towards the firing. At about a quarter-past one he came up to the *Broke*, which was then drifting helplessly about near the blazing destroyer: he took her in tow at once and sent a message through to Dover asking for tugs. The rest of the night was spent in getting the *Broke* back to harbour, in sinking the two German destroyers and picking up survivors.

We had not destroyed two German destroyers without loss to ourselves: the *Broke* had forty killed and wounded aboard her when she returned to harbour; the *Swift* one killed and four wounded. Both ships were in dockyard hands for several weeks. But the success of the night's work was in a sense decisive. It warned the German High Command that if they continued to raid the straits they could no longer count upon inflicting greater losses than they suffered themselves. After a certain amount of experimenting Admiral Bacon had worked out a set of dispositions which provided adequately for all contingencies, and made it fairly certain that if enemy destroyers ever entered the straits again they would not leave them without being seriously engaged.

For many months to come the enemy avoided the narrow waters; and his next enterprise, which took place three days later, was directed against Dunkirk.<sup>1</sup> On the night of the 24th a group of destroyers approached the town and bombarded it for several minutes; they then made off to the eastward and sank the French destroyer *Etandard*, which very boldly engaged them. One of the trawlers on patrol—the *Notre Dame de Lourdes*—was much damaged by their gun-fire, but managed to get back to Dunkirk. The British monitors in the anchorage and the destroyer *Greyhound* opened fire on the enemy's destroyers, but the attack was not sufficiently sustained for their fire to be effective.

<sup>1</sup> Thomazi, *La Guerre navale dans la zone des armées du nord*, p. 177.

*The Submarine Campaign, April 1917*

The Admiralty's review of the naval position and of the submarine campaign was circulated to the Government during the last week in March, but was not discussed. On April 23, therefore, nearly a month later, Admiral Jellicoe presented the Government with another memorandum upon the naval situation.

The new paper, though not in substance more alarming than the last,<sup>1</sup> was even more gravely worded. "It is necessary," he wrote, "to call the very serious attention of the War Cabinet to the increasingly heavy losses of our merchant ships by mine and submarine attack. It appears evident that the situation calls for immediate action. . . ." The figures which followed at once explained and justified these words. In the first fortnight of the month (April 1917) the German submarines had sunk 419,621 tons of British, Allied and neutral shipping, and the rate of destruction seemed to be rising. On a single day, April 20, 27,704 tons of British shipping were reported sunk, and 29,705 on the following day. It was quite obvious that such a rate of loss, if continued, would bring about a crisis. The First Sea Lord's remedy was that more destroyers should be built, that the United States<sup>2</sup> should be asked to send more ships; and that more merchant shipping should be laid down, either in the form of small ships, or of very large unsinkable ships for which he could provide escort. Admiral Jellicoe then dealt with his plan of preventing the German submarines from leaving the German Bight by intensive mining. He admitted that the policy had not been successful, but attributed the failure to faults in material and design. "I have reason to fear," he wrote, "that our present pattern of mine is not satisfactory against submarines; otherwise it is hardly credible that with the large number that have been laid in the last four months the losses in German submarines would not have been very heavy." A new pattern of mine had been designed; but there would be no deliveries before July. In the rest of the paper the First Sea Lord recommended building up reserves of foodstuffs while the shipping still existed, and laying down a number of very large, unsinkable vessels which would suffice to carry the country's essential supplies.

<sup>1</sup> See ante, p. 370.

<sup>2</sup> America declared war against Germany on April 6, 1917. See ante, p. 275.

The statements in this very important paper must obviously be related to the known facts of the position at sea. From the language he employed, the First Sea Lord made it quite clear that he still held to the general plan which the High Naval Command had adopted nearly four months before; that is, he hoped to master the German submarines or to hold them in check by multiplying the weapons used in our existing methods of attack. "The various methods of attack," he wrote, "are by bombs dropped from aircraft, by depth charges dropped from patrol vessels, by paravane attack, and by heavy shell in the nature of depth charges fired by patrol vessels. . . . The only immediate remedy that is possible is the provision of as many destroyers and patrol vessels as can be provided by the United States of America." Quite obviously, therefore, the First Sea Lord did not then contemplate any fundamental alteration in our entire system of defence. It is not difficult to understand why his reliance on light craft, and more particularly on destroyers, still left him in grave anxiety. From the beginning of the war to the end of March 1917 there had been one hundred and forty-two actions between German submarines and British destroyers, and the destroyers had only sunk their opponent in six of them. When therefore a German submarine commander fell in with a British destroyer, though he would certainly have to submerge and perhaps to change his ground, still his chances of escaping destruction were about 23 to 1. Apart from this, light craft were, actually, being built and delivered very fast—since the beginning of the year, five cruisers and light cruisers and thirty-seven destroyers had been put into commission—but these additional light forces had not raised the monthly rate of German submarine losses, which was still remarkably low. In the western area, where the position was serious, there were now seventy destroyers—eight at Queenstown, forty-one at Plymouth, and twenty-one at Portsmouth—yet these seventy units had not sunk a single German submarine since the unrestricted warfare began.<sup>1</sup> Possibly the First Sea Lord was right in thinking that fast light craft were the best answer to the submarines that we possessed; but it was becoming apparent that they were not being used in such a way as to achieve the desired result.

As for the mining policy adopted at the beginning of the year, Admiral Jellicoe was quite right in admitting that it had not been successful; and here again we can understand

<sup>1</sup> These were the numbers on April 23, 1917, the date affixed to the First Sea Lord's memorandum.

the cause of its failure. We now know that just as we had always managed to keep traffic moving from and to our ports, in spite of the German minelaying, so too the Germans had been able by the same means to defeat our mining operations. Since the beginning of January we had laid thirty-one fields in the Bight. They had always been discovered before they caused serious loss, and as soon as they were known to exist the necessary measures had been taken to clear them, or to discover their exact position and to mark them suitably. This, of course, was not definitely known at the time; but if German mining had never seriously interrupted the commercial traffic round the British Isles, it needed some faith to believe that the ninety-six German submarines in Germany and Flanders would ever be pinned to their bases by British mines, or even that they would suffer any serious losses when entering or leaving harbour, seeing that they could always choose their time of sailing or return, and need never move until all the necessary precautions had been taken.

Several naval officers thought—Admiral Beatty was one of them—that our minelaying had achieved nothing because the original plan of laying a barrage across the Heligoland Bight and keeping it continuously patrolled had not been adhered to. This was an explanation, and perhaps a sufficient one; but it is obvious that the plan was only workable if it was actually within our power to drive off German sweepers whenever and wherever they were at work. Knowledge and experience acquired later make it doubtful whether the original project could ever have been carried through.

On April 7 the Admiralty received information which seemed to suggest that a force of German auxiliaries would shortly be operating somewhere in the neighbourhood of the Horn Reefs light vessel. The Commander-in-Chief, when informed, sent out the 2nd Light Cruiser Squadron under Rear-Admiral Lambert; the *Champion* (flotilla cruiser) and twelve destroyers to intercept the Germans. The attack was unsuccessful, partly, no doubt, owing to the difficulty of co-ordinating a combined operation in novel circumstances, and partly because an unexpectedly strong current set them both away from the line along which the German auxiliaries—which we afterwards ascertained to be sweepers—were working. It is none the less significant that all through the night of April 8 our cruiser and destroyer forces were operating inside the area which German sweepers were reconnoitring, and that the Germans, in spite of this, were able to complete their work and return home unmolested. If a single opera-

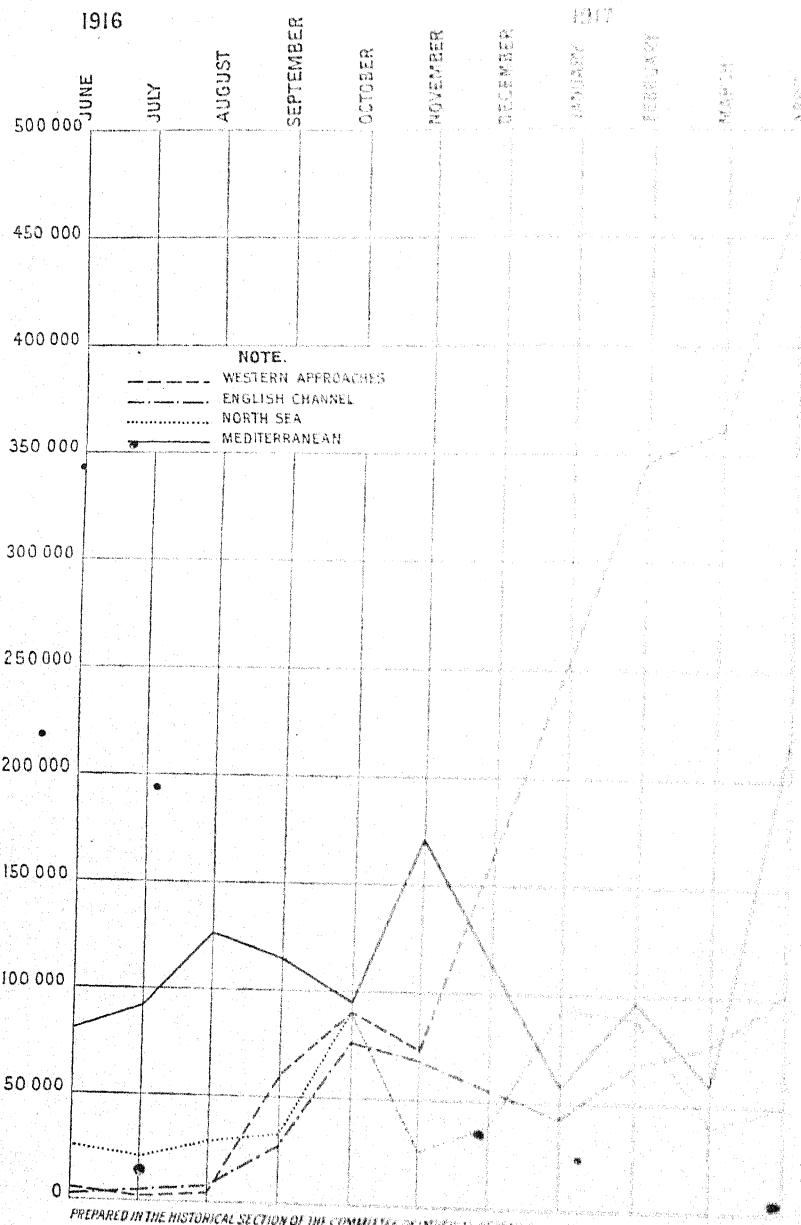
tion was subject to so many hazards and required such forces for its execution, it is easy to understand how difficult it would have been to attain our first object of keeping a continuous effective watch off our mine barrage in the Bight, and of driving off the German forces that would certainly have attempted to clear a passage through it. Yet nothing less would have sufficed: it was upon the possibility of this continuous effective watch that the entire plan depended.

In any case, the time was now past for what must be a long and uncertain experiment. The situation was so urgent that its possibilities and needs were starkly outlined: the moment was at hand when a final method must be adopted; the choice would bring about our deliverance or leave us for the first time in history at the mercy of our enemies. Experience had cleared the ground, the rest depended upon the judgment, and perhaps still more upon the imaginative conviction of our naval leaders. It was evident that, setting aside all palliatives or gradual remedies, the problem forced upon us by the successes of the U-boat commanders could be dealt with in one of two ways: either our whole forces must be thrown into the attack upon the German submarines, or else the defence of our merchantmen must be made the first consideration and the anti-submarine offensive the second. Between these two alternatives the highest naval opinion was still sharply divided. Admiral Jellicoe and Admiral Duff had decided for the first quite early in the year, and it is clear from the language that he used in his memorandum to the Government that Admiral Jellicoe had not changed his opinion after three months of unrestricted submarine warfare. He still hoped that if the destroyer patrol could be reinforced and more liberally supplied with offensive weapons, the German submarines could be driven from the shipping routes, or else be made to operate at such a disadvantage that they would cease to be dangerous. Admiral Beatty held the opposite view: he considered that the existing system of defensive patrolling by trawlers and of offensive patrolling by destroyers was wrong in principle, and that the whole second line fleet of cruisers, destroyers, sloops, "P" boats and armed trawlers should be used for escorting merchantmen through the dangerous areas. These two conflicting opinions will be found clearly expressed in the words of their most authoritative exponents.

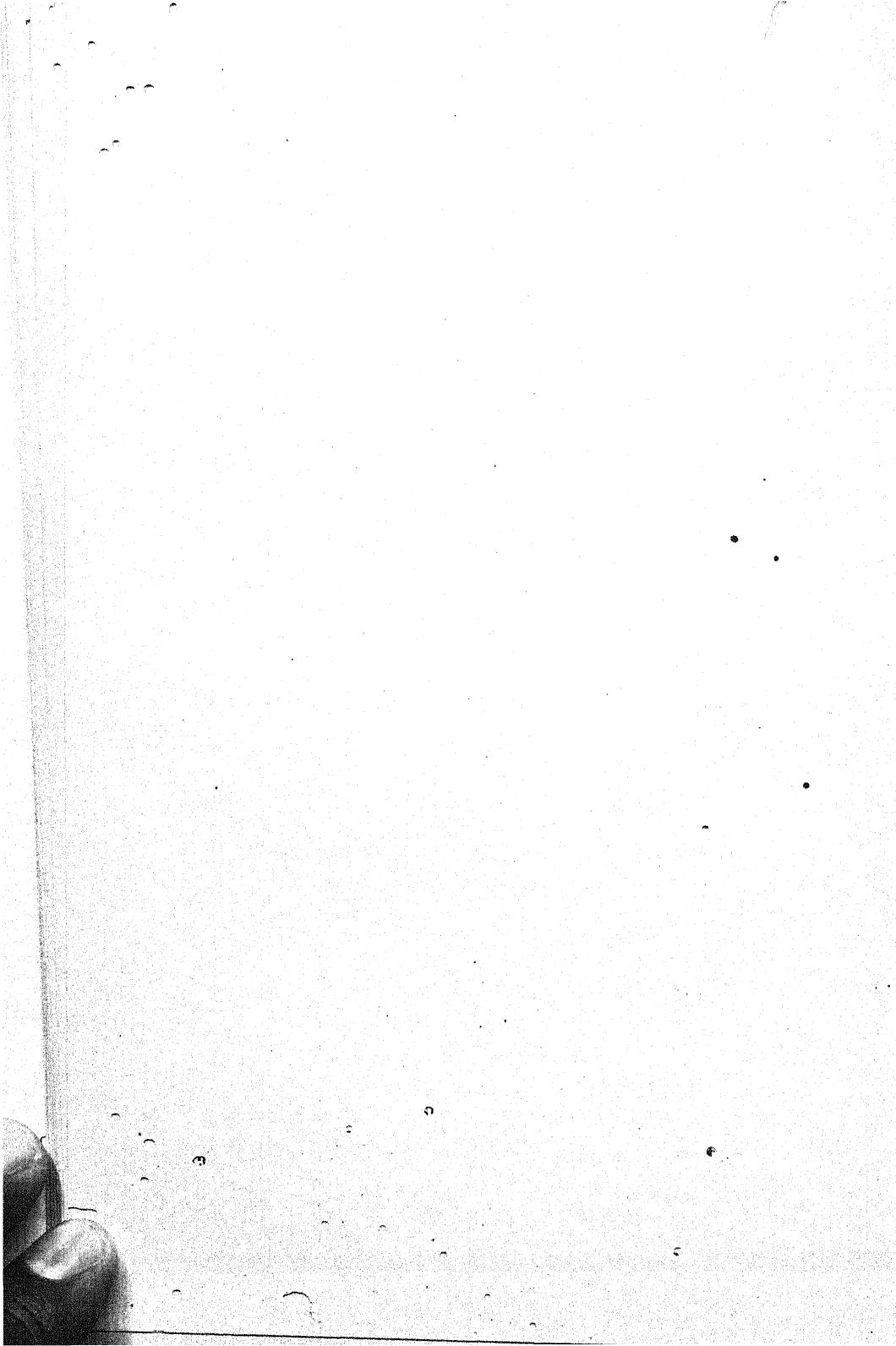
Early in April a conference had assembled at Longhope to consider the question of protecting Scandinavian trade. The officers present decided that the trade ought to be convoyed

JUNE 1916, TO APRIL 1917.

DIAGRAM SHOWING THE PROGRESS OF THE SUBMARINE CAMPAIGN  
IN THE VARIOUS THEATRES OF OPERATIONS.



PREPARED IN THE HISTORICAL SECTION OF THE COMMITTEE OF INTERNAL DEFENCE.



along the coastal route and across the North Sea.<sup>1</sup> Admiral Beatty endorsed their recommendations, in a letter which, although it was concerned only with the immediate proposals, contained a strong expression of opinion upon convoy as a strategical principle. After stating that the proposals for the Scandinavian trade were an "alteration in the policy hitherto adopted," he went on : "It is necessary to decide the relative urgency of : (i) protecting and patrolling the coast, (ii) protecting traffic along the coast. At first sight it would seem that these two objects are similar, and that if the coast is patrolled and protected, traffic should be able to proceed safely along it. Experience has shown, however, that this is not the case : patrols have given little, if any, security to shipping during the war; submarines attack vessels close to the coast and mines are continually being laid off the shore.

"Escorts have, however, proved an effectual protection, and a system of escorts does, to a large extent, fulfil the conditions of a patrol, the escorting vessels being placed in the best position for meeting and attacking hostile submarines.

It is manifestly impracticable to provide an escort for each individual vessel, the only alternative is to introduce a system of convoys. . . ."

Although the Admiralty were prepared to allow the Scandinavian trade to be placed under escort, they seem to have been decidedly at issue with Admiral Beatty upon the general principle involved. The opinion which at the time prevailed at the Admiralty was that, if merchantmen were placed under convoy, then the escort would have to be twice as numerous as the ships escorted. The Admiralty's advisers did not share the view, which was then not uncommon, that a comparatively weak escort would suffice. It was because their doubts were so strong that the Admiralty could only approve, with serious misgivings, the plan of placing Scandinavian trade under convoy. They were, however, prepared to sanction further experiment, and the S.N.O. Gibraltar was informed that a system of convoy was to be tried on the Gibraltar route. They were presumably willing to reverse their opinions on the general principle if the results were satisfactory. The Commander-in-Chief was allowed to give effect to the plan recommended by the conference at Long-hope. An escort force of twenty-three destroyers was collected from the seventh (Humber and Tyne), eighth (Rosyth), and Cromarty flotillas; and a further escort force of between

<sup>1</sup> Grand Fleet destroyers had been covering the trade route between Lerwick and Bergen for about a week past.

fifty and seventy trawlers was assembled from the patrol areas between the Orkneys and the Humber. As a temporary measure, a flotilla leader and eight destroyers were also detached from the Grand Fleet to Lerwick for convoy duties. Much now depended upon the results obtained by the new system; but whilst it was being tried cautiously in the North Sea, the situation elsewhere was passing beyond our control.

During the month of April the German submarine commanders operated against shipping by the methods which have already been described, and their attack rose to a zenith of efficiency. The patrolled routes were almost as severely attacked as during the previous month, and on the outer routes the situation was worse than it had ever been before. One trail of destruction spread fanwise into the Atlantic from the south-west point of Ireland, and another from Land's End. During the month efforts were made to concentrate shipping on a route which approached the coast of Ireland along the latitude of Galway Bay, but quite fruitlessly. Sinkings were thickest in a rough quadrilateral between the parallels of  $51^{\circ}$  and  $53^{\circ}$  N. and the meridians of  $12^{\circ}$  and  $15^{\circ}$  W. The central point of this zone of devastation was about one hundred and seventy miles due west from Berehaven, in the open waters of the Atlantic, where permanent patrolling was impossible.<sup>1</sup> The hope that the German submarine commanders would be less destructive when compelled to depend upon torpedoes instead of gun-fire proved to be ill founded. It seemed rather that they now torpedoed vessels by deliberate choice, in order to lose no time. Over thirty vessels were sunk within the area to the west of Berehaven, and every one of them had been torpedoed at sight. The use of the torpedo had increased with the rising list of sinkings. In January about eighty vessels had been sunk by gun-fire for every thirty ships torpedoed; in April the proportion was entirely reversed, and about 60 per cent. of the total sinkings were done with the torpedo.

In the Mediterranean the situation was equally dark. On the advice of the Admiralty, the French naval command had recently altered their system of defence. The traffic between France and Salonica was still kept to a fixed patrolled route, but that between Cape Bon and Port Said was put on to tracks which were varied as found necessary. The French were, moreover, pressing on with a system of aeroplane patrolling from which they hoped for good results: aviation centres were being set up at Camaret, Susa and Bona, and advanced stations, which they called "*postes de combat*,"

<sup>1</sup> See Map 11.

were established at Tabarka, Kelibia, Collo, Mostaganem, Beni Saf, Cette and Marseilles; the large force of 300 aeroplanes was allotted to the service.

The sinkings in the Mediterranean had fallen during March; but in April the submarine commanders completely outpaced the defence, and in the Mediterranean, as elsewhere, the curve of sinkings rose to an apex. By the end of the month the German submarines had destroyed 881,027 tons of shipping, at the cost of two UC-boats (numbers 68 and 30). Since unrestricted war against shipping had begun, they had sunk over 2,000,000 tons of merchantmen, and the losses to their operating forces had been two U-boats, seven UC's and one UB, and of these only seven had been destroyed by British forces acting against them: one of the remaining three had stranded on the Dutch coast, another had sunk on her own mines, the third had been lost from unknown causes.

The position resulting from our devastating losses appeared at the time to be almost desperate. Sir Leo Chiozza Money made an exhaustive analysis of the position, and, after allowing for replacements in merchant tonnage by building, repairing and purchasing from abroad, he reported to the Government that the 8,394,000 odd tons of shipping in the import and export service of Great Britain would probably be reduced to 4,812,000 at the end of the year; the total carrying capacity of this tonnage would be between 1,600,000 and 2,030,000 tons per month, and of this 1,425,000 would be required for food and cereals. The conclusion was obvious: nothing would be left for the necessary transport of troops and stores, the export of coal and all the import business of the country, and Great Britain, the prop and support of the whole coalition, would collapse.

Everything, indeed, combined to show that the Allies were really within sight of disaster. The lists of sinkings, the numbers of successful attacks, the increasing use of the torpedo, the moderate rate of German submarine losses all told the same story. Admiral von Holtzendorff's prophecy of victory was apparently verging towards fulfilment, and only a change in our system of defence could turn the tide.

## APPENDIX A

### PRECAUTIONS AGAINST RAIDERS DURING 1916<sup>1</sup>

RUMOURS that a raider was about to put to sea were circulated in June, July and October.

On May 31, the Commander-in-Chief was told that the *Moewe*, or an old cruiser of the *Niobe* class, would shortly leave Wilhelmshaven. Admiral Jellicoe sent the *Donegal* to reinforce the 10th Cruiser Squadron, and ordered Admiral Tupper to spread his ships on a line between Muckle Flugga and Iceland. On the 3rd June the Commander-in-Chief, who was uneasy about the safety of the Archangel route, ordered the *Donegal* and three ships of the 3rd Cruiser Squadron to patrol. Special precautions against raiders continued until June 11.

During the afternoon of July 8 the Admiralty telegraphed to the Commander-in-Chief that fairly reliable information had been received from Copenhagen that a new *Moewe* would leave Kiel for the North Sea and Atlantic at 5 p.m. on Sunday, 9th, accompanied by four or five torpedo boats. She was described as having two sloping funnels, painted dark grey all over, of slender build like a light cruiser, very high speed. Two Light Cruiser Squadrons with eight destroyers were sent from Rosyth to patrol an area 80 to 100 miles off the Norwegian coast, through which it was expected that the raider would have to go.

The 1st and 3rd Light Cruiser Squadrons sailed at 4.30 p.m. on 9th to carry out these orders.

The 4th Light Cruiser Squadron with six destroyers was also ordered further north to ensure a daylight intercept of hostile vessels; two cruisers, *Donegal* and *Shannon* (2nd Cruiser Squadron) were sent north of the Shetlands (between 63° and 65° N.) with a destroyer each for boarding purposes. The local patrol was strengthened between these cruisers and the Shetlands.

The *Gabriel* and a half-flotilla of destroyers patrolled the Fair Island Channel from 5 a.m. on 11th.

<sup>1</sup> See Map 14.

No enemy ships had been seen by the usual patrols up to 9th.

These intercepting dispositions remained in force till 12th, when the Admiralty informed the Commander-in-Chief that no news could be obtained about the raider, and the 1st and 3rd Light Cruiser Squadrons returned about noon to Rosyth. The 4th Light Cruiser Squadron swept to the southward, and returned to Scapa on 13th. The *Donegal* and *Shannon* also swept to southward and returned to Scapa by 7 p.m. on 14th.

There was another alarm of a raider on 21st, when the *Inconstant* and *Cordelia* (1st Light Cruiser Squadron) sailed at 3 a.m. to sweep in the direction of Horn Reefs from a position near the Naze, with orders to keep clear of the area of submarine activity. The enemy submarine track was said to run in a north-westerly direction from Ameland, with one or two boats stationed on it as far as 70 miles from land. The light cruisers returned on 23rd without having sighted anything.

As a result of a conference held in October, the Commander-in-Chief made out a set of standing orders for intercepting raiders. When the order was given, the intercepting forces were ordered to take up "disposition number one," if news of the raider had been received before she had reached latitude 59° N.: if she had passed it, they were ordered to take up "disposition number two."

In December these arrangements were put into force. The departure of the *Moewe* on November 22 was kept entirely secret; but shortly after midnight on the night of December 9/10, the British Minister at Christiania wired home that a "German ship of war" was about to pass Haugesund and go out to sea at Skudenesnaes.<sup>1</sup> This information was sent to the Commander-in-Chief, who was told that it was essential that the raider should be stopped.

The Commander-in-Chief at once ordered the 1st Light Cruiser Squadron, with three ships of the 4th and seven destroyers, to take up "disposition number one," and ordered up the 2nd Light Cruiser Squadron from Rosyth to serve as a relieving force to the ships of the 1st and 4th. Two flotilla leaders and four destroyers were sent to occupy Fair Island Channel. These dispositions remained in force until the 14th.

<sup>1</sup> See p. 197 n.

## APPENDIX B

### SUBMARINE ORGANISATION IN HOME WATERS

| SM<br>Flotilla<br>Numbers. | August 1914.                  |      |                               | December 1914.     |                               |      | January 1915.                 |      |                               | August 1916.<br>(Renumbered) |      |                              | March 1917.<br>(Reorganised) |  |                          |   |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------|------|-------------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------------|------|-------------------------------|------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|------|------------------------------|------------------------------|--|--------------------------|---|
|                            | Under<br>orders of            | L.D. | O.S.                          | Under<br>orders of | L.D.                          | O.S. | Under<br>orders of            | L.D. | O.S.                          | Under<br>orders of           | L.D. | O.S.                         | Under<br>orders of           | L.D.                                       | O.S.                     |   |
| 1st                        | C.-in-C.<br>Devonport         | 2    | O.-in-C.<br>Portsmouth        | 2                  | O.-in-C.<br>Devonport         | 2    | C.-in-C.<br>Portsmouth        | 2    | O.-in-C.<br>Portsmouth        | C.-in-C.<br>Rosyth<br>R.A.   | 4    | C.-in-C.<br>Rosyth<br>R.A.   | 1                            | C.-in-C.<br>Rosyth<br>(Hawkerraig)<br>R.A. | 1                        |   |
| 2nd                        | O.-in-C.<br>Portsmouth        | 4    | O.-in-C.<br>Portsmouth        | 4                  | O.-in-C.<br>Portsmouth        | 4    | O.-in-C.<br>Portsmouth        | 4    | O.-in-C.<br>Portsmouth        | R.A.                         | 8    | R.A.                         | 4                            | R.A.                                       | 4                        |   |
| 3rd                        | R.A.<br>Dover                 | 6    | Oire. (S.)<br>(Farnmouth)     | 5                  | R.A.<br>Dover                 | 10   | Oire. (S.)<br>(Farnmouth)     | 5    | Oire. (S.)<br>(Farnmouth)     | Oire. (S.)<br>C.-in-C.       | 10   | Oire. (S.)<br>(Farnmouth)    | 10                           | R.A. E. Coast<br>(Humber)                  | 2                        |   |
| 4th                        | R.A.<br>Dover                 | 8    | O.-in-C.<br>The Nore          | 6                  | R.A.<br>Dover                 | 6    | O.-in-C.<br>The Nore          | 6    | O.-in-C.<br>The Nore          | O.-in-C.                     | 6    | O.-in-C.<br>The Nore         | 6                            | G.-in-C.<br>The Nore                       | 3                        |   |
| 5th                        | O.-in-C.<br>The Nore          | 6    | Ad. of<br>Patrols<br>(Humber) | 6                  | O.-in-C.<br>The Nore          | 6    | Ad. of<br>Patrols<br>(Humber) | 6    | O.-in-C.<br>The Nore          | V.A.                         | 12   | V.A.                         | 5                            | V.A. Dover                                 | 5                        |   |
| 6th                        | Ad. of<br>Patrols<br>(Humber) | 6    | Ad. of<br>Patrols<br>(Humber) | 7                  | Ad. of<br>Patrols<br>(Humber) | 7    | Ad. of<br>Patrols<br>(Humber) | 8    | Ad. of<br>Patrols<br>(Humber) | Dover                        | 8    | Dover                        | 8                            | O.-in-C.<br>Portsmouth                     | 2                        |   |
| 7th                        | Ad. of<br>Patrols<br>(Clyde)  | 3    | A.C.C.S.<br>(Leith)           | 4                  | A.C.C.S.<br>(Leith)           | 4    | A.C.C.S.<br>(Leith)           | 4    | A.C.C.S.<br>(Leith)           | Oire. (S.)<br>(Farnmouth)    | 8    | Oire. (S.)<br>(Farnmouth)    | 8                            | C.-in-C.<br>Rosyth<br>(Clyde)              | 3                        |   |
| 7th                        | A.C.O.S.                      | 6    | Oire. (S.)<br>(Leith)         | 19*                | Oire. (S.)<br>(Leith)         | 22   | Oire. (S.)<br>(Leith)         | 21   | Oire. (S.)<br>(Leith)         | Capt. (S.)<br>(Farnmouth)    | 21   | Capt. (S.)<br>(Farnmouth)    | 12                           | Capt. (S.)<br>(Yarmouth)                   | 10                       |   |
| 8th                        | Oire. (S.)<br>(Harwich)       | 19*  | A.C.O.S.                      | 4                  | A.C.O.S.                      | 3    | A.C.C.S.<br>(Clyde)           | 3    | A.C.C.S.<br>(Clyde)           | Capt. (S.)<br>(Harwich)      | 3    | Capt. (S.)<br>(Harwich)      | 25*                          | Capt. (S.)<br>(Harrowich)                  | 17                       |   |
| 9th                        |                               |      |                               |                    |                               |      |                               |      |                               | O.-in-C.                     | 4    | O.-in-C.                     | 12*                          | C.-in-C. G.F.<br>(Gees)                    | 12*                      |   |
| 10th                       |                               |      |                               |                    |                               |      |                               |      |                               | Ad. of<br>Patrols<br>(Clyde) | 4    | Ad. of<br>Patrols<br>(Clyde) | 4                            | O.-in-C. G.F.<br>(Blyth)                   | 12*                      |   |
| 11th                       |                               |      |                               |                    |                               |      |                               |      |                               | Ad. of<br>Patrols<br>(Tyne)  | 5    | Ad. of<br>Patrols<br>(Tyne)  | 5                            | C.-in-C. G.F.<br>(Scapa)                   | 7**                      |   |
| 12th                       |                               |      |                               |                    |                               |      |                               |      |                               |                              |      |                              | C.-in-C. G.F.<br>(Scapa)     | 9  | C.-in-C. G.F.<br>(Scapa) | 2 |
| 13th                       |                               |      |                               |                    |                               |      |                               |      |                               |                              |      |                              | C.-in-C. G.F.<br>(Scapa)     | 7**  | C.-in-C. G.F.<br>(Scapa) | 8 |
| Plutus*                    |                               |      |                               |                    |                               |      |                               |      |                               |                              |      |                              | V.A. Coast of<br>Ireland     | 6  | V.A. Coast of<br>Ireland | 6 |
| Vulcan's                   |                               |      |                               |                    |                               |      |                               |      |                               |                              |      |                              | (Lough Swilly)               |  | (Lough Swilly)           |   |

Note: L.D. = Local Defence.  
O.S. = Overseas.  
A.B.O classes. About 300 tons; speed on surface 12 knots (nominally).  
A.B.O classes on surface: about 2.5 knots.  
Variants—600-900 tons, later 1000-2000 tons.

\* = Numbers incomplete.  
\*\* = Not ready.

Speed—14-19

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*Abbreviations :*

A.B.S. = Armed Boarding Steamer.  
 A.M.C. = Armed Merchant Cruiser.  
 A.P. = Auxiliary Patrol.  
 B. = Battleship.  
 B.Cr. = Battle Cruiser.  
 C.M.B. = Coastal Motor Boat.  
 Cr. = Cruiser.  
 G.B. = Gunboat.  
 H.S. = Hospital Ship.  
 L.Cr. = Light Cruiser.  
 M.B. = Motor Boat.  
 M/L = Minelayer.

Mon. = Monitor.  
 M/S = Minesweeper.  
 R.G.B. = River Gunboat.  
 R.I.M. = Royal Indian Marine.  
 S/M = Submarine.  
 S.N.O. = Senior Naval Officer.  
 Sq. = Squadron.  
 S.S. = Steamship.  
 S.V. = Sailing Vessel.  
 T.B. = Torpedo Boat.  
 T.B.D. = Destroyer.  
 T.G.B. = Torpedo Gunboat.

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